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Published as the Act directs, 1 Oct 1784, by W^m & J. P. Leperd Newgate Str.



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MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF
Robert Robinson
ROBERT ROBINSON,

Late Minister of the Dissenting Congregation, in Saint
Andrew's Parish, Cambridge.

By **GEORGE DYER,**
LATE OF EMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume being already swollen to a sufficient bulk, it would be unreasonable to distend it further by a tedious preface; though where considerable blame attaches, it is natural to look around for a defence. The reasons that delayed the publication, then, which I had formed into a regular apology, on a serious review, are suppressed. A detail of particulars could not be introduced without appearing in the language of egotism: and, on the whole, the conduct of those writers appears most worthy of imitation, who throw themselves on the candour of their readers; preferring to be spattered over with other people's censures, to being decorated with the chaplets of their own vanity, and besmeared with the perfumes of their own praise.

Of the *manner* in which these Memoirs are handled, a word or two shall be said; though of the execution, the reader must form

his own judgment. I affect not to be thought an original ; though I profess to copy no biographer, as a model. I betray, perhaps, a portion of weakness. A different conduct, at least, might have preserved me from some errors. But my eye has been fixed on Robert Robinson, a man who possessed strong characteristic features ; who, in his manners, was peculiar ; in his religion, a little inconstant, perhaps ; in his pursuits, a great manufacturer of varieties. As he diversifies his pursuits, I diversify my chapters. The only questions with me of importance, are, Have I, on the whole, preserved the truth of character, and yet maintained something like unity of design ? If so, I have accomplished all that was intended.

When Cicero described a complete orator, he copied a prototype, that existed only in his own mind. Biography is concerned with real life. “ A perfect character has not been described.”—It was never intended. In painting, in architecture, and in poetry, beauty is always in connection with deformity. Hence, in the two former arts, what is called the *clair-obscur* ; and hence
in

P R E F A C E.

in the two sublimest poets, Homer and Milton, those prominent blemishes. Thus it is with human character. In vulgar minds we see nothing either to admire, or to censure: their lights and shades produce nothing distinct or striking: we survey them in the gross, and their specks escape our notice. But eminent qualities are generally accompanied with great weaknesses. Robinson's foibles have not been concealed; yet he was an extraordinary man.

To some it may appear, that the writings of Robinson are too liberally introduced.—But does not the work profess to be Memoirs of his writings, as well as of his life? It is not for want of materials, nor, I believe, of invention, that such copious extracts are made; the various communications, with which I have been favoured, of his family and friends, as well as a studied attention to the lines of his character, precluded the necessity of these quotations, as an expedient of distress. Concerning the proper mode of discussion, I may be mistaken; but I have not acted from inconsiderateness or rashness. In the free critiques, likewise,

on those writings, a regard to the *πρεπόν*, to what is proper and becoming, determined my conduct. Where I perceived the man of genius, and the philanthropist, I looked with esteem; but a biographer is not compelled always to admire. He who adorns his hero with indiscriminate praise, labours under as great a mistake as he who dwells perpetually on his mistakes: and as the latter commits an injury on his friend, the former involves himself in disgrace.

If it does not appear, that I distort no facts,—that I misrepresent no characters,—that individuals, or parties, are neither traduced, nor flattered,—I have taken considerable pains to little purpose*.

Where a quotation occurs or a reference is made to a foreign author, a translation is subjoined: no apology, it is hoped, will be expected for this practice to the learned. Many readers are addressed, who would not choose to be interrupted with extracts, which

* In the last paragraph of p. 397, it may appear to some, that I apply the term *bigot* to a party: but I mean to apply it to such only of the party, as come under that character.

they

they could not comprehend. Herein the convenience of the reader is consulted, though it is attended with an increase of labour. For, with the exception of two passages, the one from Juvenal, the other from Plutarch's Distinction between a Friend and Flatterer, taken from the publications of the learned Gilbert Wakefield, and Thomas Northmore, which were at hand, all the other translations, as well poetical † as prose, are my own. I possessed no translations; and indeed preferred using my own sense to borrowing other people's.

The language of equality is adopted in this volume: it is the language of truth and soberness. And were the readers to be addressed either as Christians, as philosophers, or as men, this position might easily be maintained. Such names only are used as distinguish the sex, except where patents, degrees, and the like, give an appropriate and determinate appellation. The truth is, those artificial distinctions, that originated

† The signature D is subjoined to some of the poetical translations: but those without the signature are likewise my own.

in tyranny, and are perpetuated by custom, lie at the bottom of many serious evils that exist in society: they are commensurate with such as proceed from the accumulation of property. No! the gratification of gross or violent passions, the commission of crimes, that call down the vengeance of the laws,—these are not the greatest perverters of public order, and of public justice. The tyranny of custom, the exclusive possessing of what ought to obtain a more general circulation, or be assigned to a public stock, the mistaking of virtues for vices, and vices for virtues,—these are the great corrupters of nations. In my intercourse with society, I conform to its language: but in publications, at least for such as I am responsible, I will abide by the language of equality. In the latter case I bear a testimony to liberty; in the former I leave the reader to smile at my inconsistency. But, to speak the truth, these titles present a caricature of man, while every inch of ground he treads on, every creature, whether rational, or merely animal, every propensity of the human heart, whether virtuous or vicious, proves the deception, and mocks our pride.

*

My

My language, therefore, will appear naked and unadorned, and my periods will want the harmony, that accompanies a great name. Among writers I appear, as a native of Botany Bay, or Otaheite, among civilised nations. This inconvenience must be endured. France has emancipated mankind from these attempts at false greatness. By bursting the bars, which imprison truth, she has aggrandised her species.

By the doctrine of equality, I regulate my conduct in regard to Robinson's correspondents and friends: among these will be found some, concerning whom readers in general will feel no particular interest. But they were Robinson's friends, and therefore, though unknown to fame, find an appropriate place in these memoirs. If the names of any of his friends are omitted, it is because no letters of theirs are among the papers intrusted to my care by his family*.

Of

* It is but proper to return my thanks to all who favoured me with any communications relative to Robinson, though principally to his family for their confidence in me, and for the accurate arrangement of letters and documents, made by William Curtis. To such

x P R E F A C E.

Of my errors the reader is requested to bear two in his mind. The one is in page 2, where for "But in these sentiments" should be corrected to, "But in *some* of these sentiments." In page 433, the circular letter of the Eastern Association of Baptists, held at Harlow, which is introduced as Robinson's, was written by another minister, as every one

such, likewise, as professed a disposition to promote this publication, acknowledgements are due ; more particularly to Timothy Brown, and Robinson's son in law, Samuel Brown, both of London, to William Frend, fellow of Jesus'-College, to alderman Ind of Cambridge, and to Benjamin Flower, editor of the Cambridge Chronicle. To Edward Randall of Cambridge, author of an ingenious little work entitled Juridical Essays, I apologise for an apparent inattention to two letters of Robinson's, communicated to me, through his friendship, by his brother. They arrived too late to be inserted in their proper place. Of the name of John Audley, and others, respectful and affectionate mention should have been made in connection with the constitutional society formed at Cambridge, and of P. Musgrave and others, in connection with the petition for the abolition of the slave trade : but, at the time, I possessed not specific documents. To the author of an ingenious novel entitled "Antoinette," I am indebted for her sincere, though ineffectual efforts to procure me documents from Norwich ; and to Robinson's two generous benefactresses, for their uniform good will to the family, and their favourable regards to this publication.

will

will see by the style, and the sentiments. This mistake might have been easily rectified, by cancelling the sheet, on the discovery of the mistake; but, on the whole, it appeared best to let it pass; for the letter is not only a fair specimen of the sentiments and temper of the party, with whom Robinson was then connected, but happens to be the letter at the very association, where the resolution was passed for the publication of Robinson's Syllabus of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity. A very serious affair was made of this resolution in the House of Commons: the Breviates, therefore, at the end, will shew the nature of this association, and all that passed relative to the publication of the lectures.

I cannot conclude without expressing my thanks to the printer, for his uniform and critical attention to the sheets as they passed through the press.

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APPENDIX

MEMOIRS

MEMOIRS
OF
ROBERT ROBINSON.

THE history of nations, by the extent of its views, and the variety of its objects, may be reckoned the most important subject of human survey. Appropriated to the prospects of no party, it exhibits the characters of all: unconfined by the peculiarities of theological systems, and unembarrassed by their ambiguities, it displays all the prominent, all the interesting parts. The antiquarian, the politician, and the legislator, no less than the philosopher and the moralist, have each his share in the representation, and may gratify a favourite propensity. In the contemplation of distant events the curiosity is awakened, and the imagination is enlivened by their embellishment: while in tracing events to their causes, and in applying the experience of past ages to the wants of an existing people, the memory increases its treasures, and the judgement advances in strength.

The history of individuals opens a prospect less flattering. The light and shade of domestic scenes seem to possess too little distinction, and too much uniformity, to furnish materials for an elegant or magnificent picture. Private characters may, indeed, be pleasing, and agreeable: but appear not so strongly marked as those, which shew themselves in the display of public events, and amidst the changes of important revolutions.

But in these sentiments, is there not deception? The history of nations, it is true, comprehending a survey of many interesting characters, must, of course, afford a greater variety of entertainment, and a more ample range for instruction. But if human character be estimated by worth and by intellect; if to establish wise principles of political economy, be as beneficial to a community, as to put those principles in practice, and to give them energy, Does not the dignity of biography rise in proportion?—The life of one philosopher, properly delineated, might deserve equal attention with that of many heroes, whose exploits arrest the attention of mankind, and adorn the page of history.

CHAPTER I.

*From the Birth of Robert Robinson to the time of
his Apprenticeship in London.*

ROBERT ROBINSON was born in Swaffham in the county of Norfolk, on the eighth of January 1735. His father, Michael Robinson, was an officer in the excise, who bore an indifferent character: his mother, a person of an opposite description, and of a respectable family. Her father was Robert Wilkin, of Mildenhall in Suffolk, a man possessed of some literature and property. He married a widow, by whom he had two children, Robert and Mary. This woman brought also into his family two children by a former husband: on these Wilkin bestowed a good education; but his excessive attachment to them encroached on the affection that belonged to his own offspring. His favourite daughter-in-law, it seems, had a fine voice:—he himself also performed on the violin: he was, therefore, easily induced to betray towards this young woman too great an indulgence: hence proceeded jealousies in the other branches of the family, which ended in much domestic uneasiness.

His own daughter, Mary, took considerable

pains in the improvement of her mind, and in forming her temper by the principles of christianity. In her manners she was amiable, and, from her appearance when much advanced in years, had evidently been very beautiful. Several persons of property and respectability requested her in marriage; but the old man, having private reasons for keeping her at home, rejected their proposals. From her father's excessive partiality to his wife's children by her former husband, she soon found home very unpleasant.

From Mary's diary it appears, that she, at length, married against her father's consent,—a circumstance highly resented by the old man; the more so, as her lover was not only a person of an inferior station, but of a profligate life. The truth seems to be, that her parent's cruelty disposed her to seize the first opportunity of altering her condition; and anxiety is not always blest with foresight, or directed by prudence. From a letter of young Robinson's, addressed to his cousin, Mr. William Robinson, dated Edinburgh, December 7, 1752, it appears, that Michael Robinson, the father of Robert, was a native of Scotland.

Plutarch's remark is by no means accurate, that reproach is the constant attendant of persons,

sons, whose misfortune it was to be born of immoral parents,—still less, of poor parents *. By Valerius Maximus we are told, that it was not clearly understood, even in their own times, what occupation was followed by the mother of Euripides, or by the father of Demosthenes,—though it is almost generally agreed among the learned, that the mother of the former sold vegetables, and the father of the latter, knives †.

But what occasion for referring to Grecian or Roman writers? Have not several of the most distinguished characters in modern times, as well of the old as new world, arrived at eminence by personal exertions; and from the shades in which they seemed buried, dispersed light that illumines nations? Such were Chatham, Franklin, Laurens, and Paine.

* Πλουταρχου περι Παιδαγωγιας.

Ed. Edwards Cant. p. 6.

† Juvenal speaks of him as a blacksmith :

Dis ille adversis genitus, fatoque sinistro,
Quem pater, ardentis massæ fuligine lippus,
A carbone et forcipibus, gladiosque parante
Incude, et luteo Vulcano, ad rhetora misit.

Juven. Sat. x. v. 129.

Him adverse gods, and fate's malignant ire
Sent from the forge, the pincers, and the fire,
From all his footy blear-ey'd father's tools,
To con the lore of rhetoricians' schools.

Wakefield's Poet. Transl.

Was not the person whom kings and priests have adored, born in a condition of poverty, and confined to a low station,—educated in an obscure town, and devoted to an humble occupation*?

* It has been maintained by many Christians, that in the writings received as sacred, it is no where asserted, that Jesus worked as a carpenter. But may it not be inferred from Mark vi. 3? That he worked at his father's trade has been admitted by many divines both orthodox and heterodox. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, asserts, that ploughs and yokes, and other carpenters' work were made by Jesus. When a Christian schoolmaster was asked by Libanius what the carpenter's son was doing? he received for answer, " Making a coffin for Julian." Theod. lib. 3. c. 23.

Some objections may be made to this opinion. In a very ancient book entitled the Gospel of the Infancy, *Evangelium Infantiae*, is the following passage: " But Joseph going round the whole city took with him the Lord Jesus, when men sent for him in the way of his profession to make milk-pails, sieves, and chefts; and the Lord Jesus was with him, wherever he went: as often, therefore, as Joseph had any work to be made, either longer or shorter, broader or narrower, the Lord Jesus stretched his hands towards it, and every thing instantly succeeded to Joseph's wishes; so that there was no occasion for him to work, he being not very skilful in the trade of a carpenter." *Evangelium Infantiae ex Arabico translatus Henrico Sikiio Interprete*, sec. 38. This book is sometimes called the fifth Gospel or the Gospel of Thomas, and generally acknowledged to be spurious: it is referred to merely as matter of curiosity.

Mary's

Mary's father carried his resentment beyond decent bounds :—he would never see her husband. This circumstance much increased her trouble ; for the husband having persuaded himself, that Wilkin would put him into one of his farms, and finding himself disappointed, treated her not only with neglect, but rigor. She, however, continued accompanying him to the various places, whither he went in the character of an exciseman, and recommended herself to many respectable families, particularly clergymen's ; supporting herself and family by her own industry.

In this manner lived Mary Robinson nine years at Swaffham, where her son Robert was born. Here her two eldest children were apprenticed,—the son to a painter, the daughter to a mantua-maker. “ Her youngest son, Robert, (to use her own words) grew up a pretty scholar : he was seven years old when we left Swaffham, and had been at a Latin school a year and an half. His master was very fond of him, and used to say that he never knew a child who discovered such a capacity.”

Her husband was now called, in the course of his profession, from Swaffham to Scarning, in the same county, where being sued for a debt,

that he could not discharge, he was obliged to leave the country, and soon afterwards died, it is supposed, at Winchester.

At Scarning is an endowed grammar-school, then under the care of a clergyman, whose name was Brett. By the earnings of her needle, and by keeping a lodging-house, Mary was enabled to pay for her son's education at this school. Here several eminent persons received their rudiments, particularly Edward Thurlow, late Lord Chancellor, and John Norris, late of Wilton in Norfolk, who founded a divinity professorship at Cambridge, and bequeathed an annual premium of twelve pounds to the author of the best English essay, being a bachelor of arts, on a sacred subject.

Ever since her marriage, and, particularly, during this period, great were the difficulties of Mary; but she also possessed great sources of comfort. The cruel behaviour of her father, the immoral conduct of her husband, and the narrowness of her circumstances, conspired to involve her in severe distress: but in the pleasures of religion, in the kind attention of friends, and in the promising hopes of her son, she obtained relief and consolation. Brett, strongly attached to his young pupil, and affected at the numberless disappointments of the
mother,

mother, now unable to bear the expenses of his education, still requested his attendance, and gave him instruction gratis.

But difficulties still continued to increase. For several years after marriage, Mary used to receive from her father presents of money and of clothes for her children: but the old man, finding that the husband abused his liberality, discontinued it. The property also, which by right of inheritance ought to have fallen to her at her father's death, was bequeathed to a favourite woman, with whom he cohabited. Her husband, too, dying soon afterwards, she was deprived of all assistance from him; and, to compleat the difficulties, her brother failed in business. Thus surrounded with distress, she sold the little she possessed, and directed her attention to inquire after a situation for herself and son.

Marks of uncommon genius had by this time appeared in young Robinson, and considerable advances were made by him in such branches of learning as are usually taught in grammar schools. Of the French language he gained a considerable knowledge, which was the more easily acquired, as the French usher lodged at his mother's house. With classical literature he was better acquainted than boys usually are at
such

such an early period: he also wrote a neat hand; but seems never to have gained any knowledge of common arithmetic,—a defect the rather to be mentioned, as flowing from a prevailing omission in many public grammar-schools:—and, What neglect more serious can be conceived?—the art of arithmetic not only being of all others the most useful in commercial and domestic life, but indispensably necessary for an acquaintance with algebra, and the mathematics. The mother had once entertained hopes, that his grandfather would have supported him at college:—but he was no more: she was, therefore, under a necessity of taking her son from school, and seeking for him an employment.

It may just be observed here in passing, that an ancestor of Robinson's had been formerly of Jesus College, Cambridge, and afterwards vicar of All-Saints; which is the rather mentioned, as he preceded Robinson in disseminating the principles of the puritans, in the beginning of the last century.

Brett, Robinson's school-master, becoming acquainted with the mother's intentions, promised to be her friend, and thinking it a pity, that a youth of such fine talents should be a menial servant, endeavoured to procure him a place, favourable to his studious disposition. To
what

what cause it was owing, that the scheme failed, is not specified ;—most probably, to Robinson's ignorance of arithmetic, or to the mother's being unable to give a premium. By her diary it appears, that a female friend in London wrote to her, with the information, that, if she would accept of a trade for her son, her brother would take him apprentice without a premium. This was Joseph Anderson, a hair-dresser in Crutched Friars. The proposal was accepted :—the mother agreeing to find her son in cloaths, settled in London, and, with great industry, supported herself, and procured necessaries for Robert. The indentures bear date March 7, 1749.

In the preceding relation concerning Robinson's mother, more minuteness has been studied than was at first intended, or than the province of biography demanded. But, in noticing the unsophisticated virtues of private life, and in paying a tribute of respect to one who eminently possessed them, the pleasure is not inconsiderable. How frequently is the lustre of public actions tarnished by private vices ! And, while extensive advantages are produced to society, the individuals who perform them may be entitled to little praise : for, in the same manner as learning may be separated from the elegance of taste, public exertions

tions may be unaccompanied with the principles of goodness.

See Cromwell damn'd to everlasting fame!

POPE.

I once accidentally met with a man, who had been a journeyman in the same shop where Robinson was an apprentice. He appeared a sensible person; and with his account of his young friend I was highly pleased. "Robert Robinson!" exclaimed he, on finding I was acquainted with him,—“ Robert Robinson was one of the most ingenious, industrious and virtuous youths I ever knew; and his master understood his worth. He came to him under particular circumstances; he was a fine scholar; but had been used ill by his relations; he possessed talents that would have qualified him to have been as good a lord-chancellor as his old school-fellow, Lord Thurlow; it was not expected that he would serve out his time, and, before the expiration of his apprenticeship, his master returned his indentures: he was more employed in reading, than working; in following preachers, than attending customers; yet with the entire consent of both master and servants: we all loved Robert; we knew him to be an extraordinary youth, and concluded, that though now a hair-dresser, he would live to be a great man.”

This

This representation agrees in the main with what others have said concerning Robinson during this period: some grains of allowance must, however, be thrown into the account: for from several parts of a diary kept by him during this period, it may be inferred, that his studious cast of mind frequently exposed him to rebukes: and he has often been heard to say, that as he rose sometimes by three or four o'clock in the morning, Anderson would forbid him the use of candle. In his diary is frequently read, " I rose this morning at five—at four." He paid an invariable attention through life to early rising, adopting the Latin adage, *Mane Musis amicum*—the morning is favourable to the Muses. This excellence, indeed, he seems to have possessed by inheritance. At the advanced age of fourscore and upward, his mother used to rise by four o'clock.

In industry Robinson could be exceeded by no man; and it is evident, that he not only left school, well acquainted with the rudiments of polite learning, but applied himself to study, during his apprenticeship, with all the attention that a state of servitude allowed. In his diaries, indeed, when in London, and when after a preacher in Norwich, little more than such remarks are to be discovered as commonly occur in the journals of the Methodists; but in
several

several smaller works, published by him a few years after he was settled at Cambridge, are to be perceived traces of a considerable knowledge of books, as well as of an extensive acquaintance with the human character,—evident marks, that he was a regular student, though he was, certainly, in a great measure, a self-taught man. In this respect he resembled some of the most distinguished characters, Muretus, Julius Scaliger, and Erasmus. The latter, who became one of the most elegant scholars of Europe, was indebted to a précepteur for little more than the elements of Greek and Latin*.

Masters, says Rousseau, were not necessary to such as nature designed to make disciples. Bacon, Des Cartes, and Newton, the masters of mankind, had none themselves. What guide could have conducted them as far as their great geniusses led them? Common masters would only have cramped their capacities, by confining them within the limits of their own†.

It is observable that the man who is the standard of pure and elegant diction among the Latin writers, had been of that order, who to a proverb are reckoned less likely to excel in

* See Jortin's Life of Erasmus, book the first.

† Un Discours par J. J. Rousseau, &c.

the *παῖσις* of language, I mean slaves*: and Plautus,—of whom Varro says, that, if the Muses were willing to speak Latin, they would express themselves in his language,—if history speak truth, let himself out to grind corn†. When Dr. Johnson says, of Savage‡, that he was employed at the awl longer than he was willing to confess, he expresses what reflects no honour on his hero.

There is no sufficient reason to believe that Robinson was actually ashamed of the circumstances of his employment, though obvious reasons might exist, why he never made them, in future life, the subject of his conversation. Situated in the precincts of an university, where, in the early part of his ministry, dissenters were reckoned degraded characters, and where, in subsequent periods, the preacher rendered himself obnoxious by his writings, to make any specific declaration on this head, he might deem neither necessary, nor prudent. But his frank and singular behaviour towards the person mentioned above, during several visits paid by him at Chesterton, the particulars of which were related to me by the man himself, and the

* Vide Fabricii Bibliotheca Latina, lib. 1.

† Aulus Gellius, lib. iii. 3.

‡ Lives of the English Poets, vol. 3. Savage.

unequivocal

unequivocal mention of his trade in memorandums, are a testimony that he felt, at bottom, no shame on this head. These niceties, however, might be thought improper to introduce in funeral sermons; or, if the preachers possessed accurate information, they might feel a respectable delicacy*.

* See the Sermons on the Death of Robert Robinson, by Dr. Priestley, Dr. Rees, and Dr. Toulmin.

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

From the time of his Apprenticeship in London, to his settling at Cambridge.

NOT to enquire into the rise and progress of either religious or enthusiastic affections*, or to discuss the question concerning the "five points," and without undertaking to pass unqualified censure, or excessive panegyric, either on the Arminian or Calvinistic Methodists, suffice it to say, that Robinson very early in life became a regular attendant on the preaching of the latter: he was educated in the church of England, though he soon proved an unruly disciple.

During his apprenticeship in London, his favourite preachers were John Gill and John Guise,—the former eminent as the most rabbinical doctor of his age, and for writing, besides a variety of other theological works, nine folio volumes on the scriptures; the latter ce-

* The doctrine of "religious affections" has been amply discussed by an American divine, on the principles, at this time maintained by Robinson. The writer possessed considerable talents, and the treatise, as conformable to those principles, is judicious.—See "A Treatise concerning Religious Affections, by Jonathan Edwards."

lebrated for his Commentary on the New Testament. He became also a sincere admirer of William Romaine, late rector of St. Ann's, Blackfriars: but the minister to whom he was the most affectionately attached was George Whitfield, whom he called his spiritual father. When at Norwich and Cambridge, his letters to the latter breathe the genuine respect of a dutiful son, and the self-abasing language of a sincere Calvinist.

It is not improbable, that Robinson received a strong bias at a very early period towards the ministry, by observing the wonderful exertions of George Whitfield and his fellow labourers at the Tabernacle. At this place Whitfield accidentally read one or two of his spiritual son's letters, while he was present;—an event, which the latter seems to have considered as important; who cries out with rapture on the occasion, in a diary kept by him at this time, “What hath God wrought!”

To dwell too minutely on the incidents of his life, while an apprentice in London, would be both unnecessary and tedious, though he kept so singular a diary, that they might be traced with considerable ease; for, notwithstanding the necessary engagements of his calling, the minuteness of his diary is surprising.

ing. His method of journalising he derived from George Whitfield.

To those who enjoyed his friendship in the latter part of his life, or may now be disposed to form an acquaintance with him for the first time, a quotation or two from his "experience*" may afford some entertainment. It will, at least, display the genius of methodism: and the reader is at liberty to smile or look grave, as he thinks proper, provided he indulges no malevolent passion. The artist who would study the human figure, and perceive its symmetry and proportion, should survey it in all attitudes. Thus the philosopher traces the progress of mind, and ascertains the human character.

Lord's day November.—Heard Mr. Whitfield this morning at Tabernacle, Acts iv. 13. Dr. Gill went on this forenoon, Job xii. from the 7th to the end of the 12th verse. He was very precious to me. In the afternoon he was in Daniel viii. 9.—very excellent indeed to my soul. I drank tea afterwards with Mr. Innys, and had some Christian conversation: he read to me part of the letter which he is about to send to the bishop of London. Lord, prosper it.

* For the meaning of the word "experience," see p. 23.

Wednesday.—This being lord mayor's-day, I went and saw him (Sir Charles Asgill) and the aldermen go from Guildhall, to take water for Westminster.—After dinner I went to Westminster bridge, and saw them pass in the barges by water, after which I returned to Cheapside: saw the man in armour, and the gentry return: first lord keeper in black robes, trimmed with gold: then lord chancellor in scarlet: then lord treasurer in black, as the other: after them the judges in scarlet gowns with white linen sleeves, black silk girdles, and black silk round their necks, full bottom wigs and black on the crown: afterward lord mayor, aldermen and sheriffs in scarlet, and gold chains,—exceeding grand *.

Thursday.—I think this day our dear king is seventy-four years of age. O! my soul, bless God for the liberty we enjoy under his mild and gentle reign. Lord, bless him with the choicest of thy blessings spiritual and temporal! I went to the monthly meeting at Mr. Hall's, and found it was good to be there. A good man in his own hair, from Deptford, prayed first: then old Mr. Crookshanks

* Robinson here observes, "that what most pleased him was his evening entertainment: for he went to Tabernacle, and heard George Whitfield spiritualise the lord mayor's show."

preached

preached a sweet sermon, very awakening, from Hebrews xi. 7:—the oldest preachers are most thundering of late. God prosper them! Mr. Hitchin prayed next very sweetly; then Mr. Conder dismissed us with an affecting prayer. Lord, hear us for this sinful land!

Friday November.—As the Lord has been pleased so signally to own and bless the Prussian arms, (having on the 5th of November, when many, I trust, were praying for him, enabled him with about 1700 men to conquer an army of French and Austrians of 60 or 70,000: the Lord stirred up the king of Prussia and his soldiers to pray: they kept up three fast-days, and spent about an hour praying and singing psalms before they engaged the enemy: O! how good it is to pray and fight!)—we kept this day at Tabernacle giving thanks to God: Mr. Whitfield expounded the twentieth chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, very sweetly: in the morning at seven he explained thirteen verses, and at noon to the end of the thirtieth verse, and sweetly improved them; and then sang, “Rejoice! the Lord is King*.”—Heard Mr. Skelton to night from Romans iv. 25.

* A hymn well-known among the methodists.

Saturday.—Heard Mr. Whitfield to night from Revelations, ii. 9.

Friday December.—Heard Mr. John Westley from Ecclesiastes, ii. 1. I liked him well; they kept a watch night, and spent from 8 till 11 in prayer and singing. It was much blessed to me.

Saturday December.—Heard Mr. Whitfield very sweetly to night from Exodus xxxiii. 18.

This part of his diary has been taken at hazard, not as containing any thing more than usually interesting. He sometimes enters more into particulars.

Among his diaries when in London is also found a copy of verses, of no great merit, indeed, inscribed on the back de Georgio Whitfield, and love letters. But, whether his fair one was cruel or proud, or he himself inconstant, does not appear. On the back of one letter, the last written to this fair one, are these words, “*littera scripta, sed non missa, ad dominam. . .*” These diaries and love letters prove Robert to have been a warm enthusiast of the most innocent description: the former containing little else, but what is called by the methodists “*experience;*” which is usually composed

posed of heads of self-examination, temptation, spiritual desertion, consolation, support, &c. His love letters contain nothing but effusions of religion, rather than amorous passion.

By degrees he rendered himself conspicuous, as a professor of religion, so as to be thought by many a fit person for the ministry; and notwithstanding the humiliating language that appears on the surface of the following passages, his thoughts were wholly engrossed in preparing for his favourite employment.

“ It is strange, says he, in some part of his diary, that people all run away with a notion of my being called to the ministry. Lord, accomplish thy will, is all I have to say. If my king sends an ambassador, I know he will send credentials with him.”

In another place, he says, “ This night I supped at —— who wants me to join a church, that I may be sent out into the ministry. But, God forbid, that I should run, before I am sent, or, being sent, I should seek any sinister end! Oh! the weight, the insupportable weight of the ministry! From some part of his diary, it seems he used occasionally to preach for an hour together in his own room to himself: which was probably one mean, by which he acquired that great facility of colloquial address,

in which, as doctor Price, on hearing him preach in London, observed, that he excelled beyond any man he ever heard. He appears to have entertained the idea of being a preacher as early as the nineteenth year of his age: this inclination had been much encouraged by a worthy dissenting minister, of Isleham, Cambridgeshire.

Having received his indentures from his master, and leaving behind him an unblemished character in London, he went to his native country, Norfolk. Here he commenced a preacher among the methodists. The innocence of his youth, the agreeableness of his manners, and the enthusiasm of his genius, all conspired to render him popular.

Whether young Robinson, in his journey to Norwich, acted under the belief of an immediate call, or was influenced by the persuasion of others,—whether the meanness of his employment mortified, or disappointment in love dejected him, does not appear: but it seems surprising, that he should be preaching at Norwich among the methodists without even the knowledge of his spiritual father, the great apostle of that people. Among his letters is found the following from George Whitefield, dated May 25, 1758.

DEAR MR. ROBINSON,

Why did you not make your case known to me before you left London? I should be glad to know what motives induced you to leave it? And, how you came to go to Norwich? And, what prospect you have of a growing people? You may send a line to London, and it will be sent after me into the country. I have now opened my summer's campaign. The Redeemer hath given us a good beginning: Who knows but we shall have a glorious ending? He is all in all.—You find that he strengtheneth and blesteth you in his work, and causeth your rod to bud and blossom.—That your bow may abide in strength, that you may be clothed with humility, and that the arms of your hands may be continually strengthened by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, is the earnest prayer of, Mr. Robinson,

Your Affectionate Friend in our
Common Lord,

GEORGE WHITFIELD.

His first sermon he preached to a few poor people at Mildenhall, from Job, ix. 2. He was soon after invited to the Tabernacle in Norwich, where he spoke for the first time to a numerous auditory, from Rev: ii. 8, 9, 10. Of this discourse he observes, "The Lord was very

ry gracious to me, and gave me strength equal to my day. He favoured me with great boldness, and owned the word to me." He also preached sometimes at Isleham in Cambridgeshire, Fernecet, and Claxton in Norfolk, and resided occasionally in London.

During his continuance in Norfolk he kept his diary on a larger scale, and discovered particular attention in recording his religious feelings, when speaking in public, or discharging any other ministerial duty. Agreeably to the practice of the methodists, his addresses were always extemporaneous ; and being a believer in supernatural influence, he was accustomed to ascend the pulpit without the least preparation. "I could not, says he, in one part of his diary, get a text from the Lord, till the last verse of the hymn. I took these words after from Solomon's Song, "Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." He observes, he should, indeed, have preached from this verse before, but he could not tell the meaning of *being sick of love* : "however, the Lord opened it to me."

When residing in London he had been used to attend ministers who excelled in spiritualising Solomon's Song ; and he seems himself to have possessed a great knack at this religious trifling. How little did he think that he should
live

live to believe it nothing but a pretty love song,
addressed to some mortal beauty* !

The spiritualising of the scriptures, as it is called, of which the above affords a small specimen, must not be thought peculiar to the experience book of a young man of warm and lively passions. From the days of Augustine to those of Dr. Gill, how many folios upon folios, written by grave and learned men, have trifled in the same manner! Dr. Gill, and John Hufsey, whom there will be occasion to mention again, possessed wonderful skill this way. Gill has written a large quarto volume of explications and spiritual commentaries on this book ; so has William Romaine. And in a most extraordinary book on the *Glory of Christ Unveiled*, which is full of this sort of interpretations of the scripture, written by Hufsey, it is seriously maintained, that " The ten commandments are broken by believing Arminianism. Arminians, says this singular writer, make a divinity of man's power, and so are guilty of idolatry. The second * command is broken by bowing down to this idol. The third is broken by speaking against effectual grace. For to do this is to take God's name in vain. Arminians break the seventh by committing adultery with this idol, the work of

* See Claude's " Essay on the Composition of a Sermon."

their

their own hands ; and they break the tenth by coveting their neighbours' interest in God and Christ *."

But do I mean to insult the ashes of Gill and Hufsey ? By no means. These men, it is true, were dissenters, but, however full of reveries, possessed no common talents, and considerable learning. " How easy would it be, to shew, to borrow Robinson's words, in spite of lord Clarendon and Dr. Burn, that the dissenters have not a brother so ignorant and impudent, as to dare to preach, even in this way of spiritualising, to seven old women in a hogstye, what doctors and bishops have preached before universities and kings † !" and, indeed, among the antients, Plato, and afterwards his admirers and imitators, the profound Proclus, and the zealous Julian, trifled not less ridiculously. Can the spiritual commentaries, penned by Christians, concerning the Sun of Righteousness, exceed what the latter has advanced in his oration to the Sovereign Sun ‡ ?

I cannot

* See Hufsey's " Glory of Christ Unveiled," page 526, quoted by Robinson in Claude's Essay on the Composition a Sermon, Vol. I. page 125. notes.

† See Claude's " Essay on the Composition of a Sermon," Vol. I. Advertisement.

‡ See particularly the Parmenides of Plato, and, among the latter Platonists, Proclus. The emperor Julian's works contain many curiosities. His singular rhapsodies the
English

I cannot proceed without stopping to make a remark on the practice among the methodists of keeping a journal. A diary, as a kind of check to the waywardness of passion or any frivolity of character, or as a register of the most important transactions of life, presents nothing, either vain or enthusiastic. This practice has been adopted by the wisest and most rational of mankind. The folly and vanity consist in recording frivolous pursuits and uninteresting occurrences with an air of seriousness; in concealing spiritual pride under the language of humility. In his London diary, Robinson makes the following memorandum: "Such a day I went to dine on a goose: after service I went to Mr. — to supper, and had part of a pudding, made of some rice sent by my dear spiritual father." He frequently speaks of himself in terms of the most degrading humility, yet, at the same time, discovers sufficient self-complacency.

Such things may be easily forgiven in the

English reader may be acquainted with in an English translation, by Thomas Taylor. See two Orations of the emperor Julian; one to the *Sovereign Sun*, and the other *To the Mother of the Gods*, with notes by Thomas Taylor, a translator, who, though he cannot be always complimented for his verbal accuracy, is entitled to respect, as unfolding at large to English readers the Platonic philosophy; a department, in which he displays both industry and talents.

hasty

hasty scribble of a young apprentice : but how many things equally ridiculous, and infinitely more offensive, recur in those journals, which he received as models !

While he was at Norwich, his affections centered in a young woman of the name of Ellen Payne, whom he afterwards married : but amongst the methodists he continued not long. From a letter written to Whitfield at this time, it appears, that one of their preachers was an immoral character, and could neither agree with Robinson nor the other ministers : and from several parts of his diary, that some of the people also were grossly profligate.

Many persons amongst the methodists possess the purest affections and most correct morals : George Whitfield was always spoken of by Robinson as such a character. But imaginary assistances are frequently productive of extravagant conduct : the most rapturous affections are sometimes the most inconstant, and often very vicious *. Love of truth and of virtue alone is consistent.

On

* “ There are two sorts of hypocrites,—one that are deceived with their outward morality, and the other are those that are deceived with false discoveries, and elevations, which
often

On leaving the methodists, our young preacher, with thirteen other persons attached to his sentiments, formed a congregational or independent church in the parish of St. Paul, Norwich: when, according to the practice of the independent churches, he drew up his Confession of Faith, comprehending the several points of Calvinistic doctrine, which it is unnecessary to particularise here, as there will be a better opportunity hereafter.

At this place he became the settled pastor, and administered the rites commonly called Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Here he baptised infants; but being invited from Norwich to Cambridge, a situation where his genius
and

often cry down works and men's own righteousness, and talk much of free grace; but at the same time make a righteousness of their own discoveries, and of their humiliation, and exalt themselves to heaven with them. These two kinds of hypocrites Mr. Shephard, in his Exposition of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, distinguishes by the names of legal and evangelical hypocrites, and often speaks of the latter as the worst. And it is evident, that the latter are by far the most confident in their hope, and with the most difficulty brought off from it: I have scarcely known an instance of such an one in my life that has been undeceived. The chief grounds of the confidence of them are, the very same kind of impulses and supposed revelations, (sometimes with texts of scripture and sometimes without) that so many of late have had concerning future
events.

and his character had room to unfold themselves, he did not continue long with this congregation.

The invitation from Cambridge he received in the spring of 1759,—being then twenty three years of age, having preached three among the methodists. Previously to his leaving Norfolk he had been baptised according to the practice of the baptist churches, at Ellingham, by a baptist minister, whose name was Dunkhorn, successor to Wright, well known among the Calvinistic dissenters of that county as a writer of hymns.

July

events, calling these impulses about their good estate, the witness of the spirit, entirely misunderstanding the nature of the witness of the spirit. Those that have had visions and impulses about other things, it has generally been to reveal such things, as they are desirous and fond of; and, no wonder that persons who give heed to such things, have the same sort of visions and impulses about eternal salvation, to reveal to them that their sins are forgiven, that their names are written in the book of life, that they are in high favour with God, &c. and especially when they earnestly seek, expect and wait for evidence of their election and salvation, this way, as the surest and most glorious evidence of it. Neither is it any wonder, that when they have such a supposed revelation of their good estate, it raises in them the highest degree of confidence of it. It is found by abundant experience, that those who are led away by impulses and imagined revelations, are extremely confident:

July 8, 1759. He preached for the first time at Stoneyard Cambridge from the first of Corinthians xv. 3. and at the end of the week returned to Norwich. He was on trial two years; but for prudent reasons settled not at Cambridge till the spring of 1761. A short time before his being appointed minister at Cambridge, he married the person, to whom he paid his addresses in Norfolk.

On his arrival in Cambridgeshire he resided at Fulbourn with a very honest man, a member of the congregation at Cambridge. Whether he here became first acquainted with commissary Graves, I know not: there is a letter of Graves's, to him, written some years afterwards, expressing the highest admiration of Robinson's talents, and labours in the cause of religious liberty,—noticing at the same time some particular acts of his benevolence to the poor. Graves at the same time observes that he thought it incumbent on him to make the most honourable mention of him in all the circles of his acquaintance, whether in the town or the university, which he failed not to do *.

confident: they suppose, that the great Jehovah has declared these and those things to them, and having his immediate testimony, a strong confidence is the highest virtue." Edwards on Religious Affections, Part ii. § xi.

* These circumstances are noticed as honourable in

D

Graves,

Graves, and were always mentioned by Robinson in terms of respect: for the latter was at the time a very poor dissenting minister, and the dissenters at Cambridge were of no account. Graves on the other hand was a churchman of large fortune and wealthy connections: his rank in the university very high.

CHAPTER III.

The Rise and Establishment of the Dissenters at Cambridge.

WHEN the interesting character of Robinson is recollected, as well as the part acted by him at Cambridge, some indulgence, perhaps, will be allowed to an historical review of the rise of the dissenting interest in that town. The information, and, sometimes, the words are taken from the dissenters' church book, written with great care by Robinson, and entitled "Memoirs of the protestant dissenting church of Christ usually denominated baptists, voluntarily congregated out of several parishes, and assembling for divine worship at their meeting house in St. Andrew's Parish, Cambridge," written in 1774. Robinson evidently intended that such use of those memoirs should be made.

The founders of the first dissenting churches in the town and county of Cambridge were Francis Holcroft, M. A. Fellow of Clare Hall, and Joseph Oddie, M. A. Fellow of Trinity College, with other coadjutors, among whom were several heads of colleges, Dr. Tuckney, master of St. John's, Moses of Pembroke, Dell of Caius, Sadler of Magdalen, Bond of Trinity Hall,

Hall, and forty more persons ejected from their preferments by the Act of Uniformity, 1662. But in order to preserve method, it may be necessary to go more backward still.

In 1534, the university of Cambridge, by a decree to which was affixed the public seal, renounced popery; and in 1538 Henry the Eighth having divested the pope of his power, and clothed himself with the spoils, altered the English church.

In doctrine the protestants asserted an uniformity of sentiment, and, with a few exceptions, were consistent: but in discipline they widely differed; one party preferring the episcopal form, the second the presbyterian, a third the congregational, or independent. The splendour of episcopacy best accords with the genius of a court, and, accordingly, that form was established by law in England, to the exclusion of even toleration for the other two. Those, however, who disapproved some of the ceremonies, and discipline of the church, had indulged hopes of an union, and for some time conformed to the established religion; but, finding at length their hopes ill-founded, separated. Those who first formed a church were the presbyterians, who assembled at Wandsworth, November 20, 1572. The independents formed their first church in England in 1616.

The baptists in London 1640; and thus, as Robinson expresses it, "protestants became dissenters."

In the church book alluded to above, is a judicious statement of the leading principles of the church of England, together with the objections of the protestant dissenters. But to exhibit them here would lead too far from our main design, and the reader may find them stated more at large in books written professedly on this subject*.

"Reverend Francis Holcroft, I shall here use Robinson's words, was the son of sir — Holcroft of Westham near London. Mr. David Clarkson was his tutor; and Tillotson, afterwards archbishop, was his chum, a college term for a chamber fellow †. He was ejected from the living of Basingbourn by the act of uniformity, and, for preaching privately in Cambridgeshire and places adjacent, was imprisoned nine years from 1663 to 1672. He had been sentenced to quit the realm in three months or

* See particularly De Laune's Plea, Piercii Vindiciæ Fratrum Nonconformistarum, Dr. Furneaux's Letters to Judge Blackstone, Neale's History of the Puritans, lately republished by Dr. Toulmin, and Calamy's Abridgement, lately republished by Samuel Palmer, &c.

† See Birch's Life of Archbishop Tillotson.

to suffer death. But the earl of Anglosea procured his reprieve."

After his enlargement, he was imprisoned again three years for the same offence, as before: during his confinement in the castle, his keeper often allowed him to go out, and preach in the night,—and while he was in the fleet-prison, so many people flocked to him, that he often, through the heat of the place, used to preach in his waistcoat, and ruined his health.

After his release he returned to Cambridge, and became an itinerant preacher, forming many churches into congregational order. While at college he was communicant with Jephcot of Swaffham: he was the father of independency in this county, and died January 6, 1692, in the sixty-third year of his age, Calamy says at Triplow, report says at Granfden.

" Reverend Joseph Oddie, or Oddy, I here borrow Robinson's words, born at Leeds in Yorkshire, was master of arts, and fellow of Trinity College, and vicar of Meldred, from which place he was ejected. For preaching in and about Cambridge he was often imprisoned, once five years.

In 1672 he was released, and, with his colleague

league Holcroft, became an itinerant preacher. He was much followed, and often preached abroad. This blessed man, as Robinson expresses it, died May 3, 1687."

The church at Houghill was congregated when James the second granted toleration, and for many years had Joseph Hufsey for its pastor. Robinson calls him the learned and famous Joseph Hufsey; and famous he was in the independent churches of those times. His doctrines were rigid, but many still think them favourable meat. He was born March 1660, settled in Cambridge 1691, and removed from thence to London in March 1720. He left behind him an audience of upwards of 1000 persons, and a church consisting of upwards of 150 members. He died in London, November, 1726.

After Hufsey's departure, there were two candidates for the pastoral office, Throgmorton and Davis: the majority who were the poorer party, were for choosing Davis; the minority who were the richer members were for Throgmorton. The adherents of the latter did not amount to 50. Those of the former to more than three times that number. For some time the matter was compromised by an agreement, that one should preach in the morning,

the other in the afternoon : but on March 26, 1720, Throgmorton's party, thinking that numbers should yield to money, and as little acquainted in reality with liberty as the episcopalians, whom they thought tyrants by profession, forgetting, as Robinson gently expresses himself, the principles of dissent, refused by a constable the pulpit to Davis. He was, therefore, obliged to withdraw, and, with one hundred members, hired and fitted up a stable and granary in St. Andrew's parish in a place called Stone Yard, which they hired for twelve years. Davis preached there for the first time April 16, 1721.

In 1723, this new church was broken again, by an unhappy affair, into two parts, in consequence of which Davis was excluded by a majority from the pastoral office. Those who were engaged in his interest believed him innocent of the charges brought against him, and separating again from the new church fitted up a place at Barnewell*, a village two miles from Cambridge on the East side.

The

* As this village will, perhaps, recall to the memory of some Cambridge students certain juvenile indiscretions, unnecessary to record here,—and as the term Barnewell may be thought derived from some correlative circumstance, the reader is here presented with the following quotation

The church at Stone-yard, which consisted of eighty-eight members, now thought of choos- ing a new minister ; and the baptists being the majority proposed one of their own persuasion, and a strict communion, that is, that none should be admitted to what is called the Lord's Supper, but such as had been baptised* by im- mersion on their own profession of faith.

The question concerning strict and mixed communion, as they are called, has formed and still forms, a very serious controversy among the baptists, and independents ; to discuss it here would be improper. Robinson has himself agitated the question in a small work hereafter to be noticed. The first baptist church in

quotation from Caius' History of Cambridge : *Vocabatur is locus Barnewell, hoc est puerorum fons, quod in ejus loci medio vividi purique fontes scaturiebant, quodque pueri atque adolescentes annis singulis in vigilia Sancti Johannis Baptistæ eo concurrentes luctari et aliis lufibus se exercere consueverant. Cujus spectaculi causa, concurrentes multitudine mercatores spe lucri ducti negotiandi causa advolarant.* This, according to Chroniclers and Caius, is the origin of the town and fair.

* By baptism, the baptists always understand, and they are indisputably accurate, immersion. It should be observed, that the word, *βαπτισμος*, from whence comes baptism, was not used either in Egypt, Syria, or Greece itself, till the time of Christ. Sophocles uses the word *βαπτω*, Plutarch *βαπτίζω*, and for lavacrum, and the act of immersion, Lucian uses *βαπτισις*.

England

England was for free or mixed communion : the pastor's name was Jesse.

“ The baptists, as Robinson continues, loth to separate, and thereby risque their own interest, as well as that of the independents, would not act at all in the appointment of a minister, or the regulation of the discipline, but left the government of the church to the pædobaptists.”

In July 15, 1725, the minority settled — Sewell for their pastor. This was an old man, and his ministry unacceptable to the baptists, who, as might have been easily foreseen, separated from him soon after his ordination.

Sewell removed to a congregation at Stanstead in Essex, when the baptists hiring a barn called Millar's barn in St. Andrew's Parish, fitted it up in the spring of the year 1726. It was licensed on April the eighth, and on the sixteenth it was preached in for the first time. Hufsey's church was thus in the course of six years divided into four parts. Robinson here forms an apology for this separating conduct of his dissenting brethren, and triumphs over the dull uniformity of the established church.

After Sewell's departure from Cambridge,
the

the two meetings, the Stoneyard, and Millar's barn, agreed to unite, and moved to Stoneyard, November 9, 1727. After agitating the old question of strict and mixed communion, they settled on the mixed plan, and appointed Andrew Harper their minister, a person no ways eminent either for talents, or learning, but one beloved by his people when living, and remembered with gratitude when dead. He was succeeded by George Simpson M. A. 1745. Robinson gives a curious account of this man. " He was, says he, a North Briton, educated at Aberdeen, where he took his master of arts degree, a compleat scholar, a good preacher, a thorough protestant dissenter, a rigid baptist of a violent temper, a lord in his church, a tyrant in his family, and a libertine in his life." Robinson thus continues his narrative " The church, disunited in their tempers, dispirited in their prospects, and low in their circumstances, jangled awhile, and then broke up; the doors were shut and the people dispersed."

So low was the state of things among the dissenters at Cambridge, when a few members of the former church assembling, and reproducing their written religious agreement, which Robinson calls, renewing covenant, thought of making one more effort, to procure a settled minister!

Those

Those readers who are accustomed to consider the art of preaching, merely as the art of getting a livelihood, will consider the invitation of these wrangling dissenters, as a bold and unwarranted measure : the members were only thirty four, most of them poor villagers who could only raise 3l. 12s. 5d. per quarter : this circumstance is mentioned not merely to enhance the self-denial of Robinson : for events conspired to render his situation at Norwich unpleasant. His relations had become his enemies, His religion was the source of their aversion ; he had been deprived, as he expresses himself, of his maternal fortune ; his intention of marriage rendered it expedient, that he should look out for a settlement ; and his penetration was too quick, not to perceive, that to one, who wished not only to propagate his favourite opinions, but to advance in intellectual improvement, Cambridge, though at present an unfruitful soil, might, by industry and a dexterous management of local advantages, be rendered productive. At the same time he had as great self-denial and as much benevolence as most men.

We have already observed, that he became the stated pastor at Cambridge in 1761. When the minister settles, it is the general practice with those churches that call themselves orthodox,

dox, to receive a confession of faith from their intended pastor. Robinson, accordingly, drew up his confession which embraced the several articles, that may be seen in the Appendix *. Robinson, after reading his creed to the church, observed, that “ these appeared scriptural truths ; that where any of them surpassed his comprehension, his reason did homage to revelation : that in this there was nothing done but what a naturalist did every time he studied a daisy : that he intended, however, in his future ministry, to dwell on the least disputable, as they were the most essential, truths of religion.”

The account, which he gives of his settling with his congregation is so modest, that an extract cannot but be agreeable. “ The settlement of Robinson seems rather a romantic, than a rational undertaking. For this pastor was to be maintained. He had not received above ten guineas from his own family for some years : he had no future prospect of receiving any : his grandfather had cut him off with a legacy of half a guinea. He had received only an hundred pounds with his wife, and this he had diminished among the methodists. He had never enquired what this con-

* See Appendix, No. I.

Those readers who are accustomed to consider the art of preaching, merely as the art of getting a livelihood, will consider the invitation of these wrangling dissenters, as a bold and unwarranted measure: the members were only thirty four, most of them poor villagers who could only raise 3l. 12s. 5d. per quarter: this circumstance is mentioned not merely to enhance the self-denial of Robinson: for events conspired to render his situation at Norwich unpleasant. His relations had become his enemies, His religion was the source of their aversion; he had been deprived, as he expresses himself, of his maternal fortune; his intention of marriage rendered it expedient, that he should look out for a settlement; and his penetration was too quick, not to perceive, that to one, who wished not only to propagate his favourite opinions, but to advance in intellectual improvement, Cambridge, though at present an unfruitful soil, might, by industry and a dexterous management of local advantages, be rendered productive. At the same time he had as great self-denial and as much benevolence as most men.

We have already observed, that he became the stated pastor at Cambridge in 1761. When the minister settles, it is the general practice with those churches that call themselves orthodox,

dox, to receive a confession of faith from their intended pastor. Robinson, accordingly, drew up his confession which embraced the several articles, that may be seen in the Appendix *. Robinson, after reading his creed to the church, observed, that “ these appeared scriptural truths ; that where any of them surpassed his comprehension, his reason did homage to revelation: that in this there was nothing done but what a naturalist did every time he studied a daisy: that he intended, however, in his future ministry, to dwell on the least disputable, as they were the most essential, truths of religion.”

The account, which he gives of his settling with his congregation is so modest, that an extract cannot but be agreeable. “ The settlement of Robinson seems rather a romantic, than a rational undertaking. For this pastor was to be maintained. He had not received above ten guineas from his own family for some years: he had no future prospect of receiving any: his grandfather had cut him off with a legacy of half a guinea. He had received only an hundred pounds with his wife, and this he had diminished among the methodists. He had never enquired what this con-

* See Appendix, No. I.

gregation would allow him, nor had any body proposed any thing. They had paid him, for the first half year, 3l. 12s. 5d. they had increased since, but not enough to maintain him frugally; there was no prospect of so poor a people supplying him long, especially should his family increase, which it was likely to do. Besides, the congregation, through the libertinism of many of its former members, had acquired a bad character. These would have been insurmountable difficulties to an older and a wiser man: but he was a boy, and the love of his flock was a million to him. His settlement, therefore, on this article should be no future precedent for future settlements." In a note he adds, "the support of this church, has always been by a quarterly voluntary subscription paid to the deacons. During the first years of his ministry the annual income kept increasing from the small beginning mentioned to 25, 30, 35, 40, 50l. in succeeding years; and about the year 1770, it amounted to upwards of 90l. since that year it has decreased, and of late increased again. The perpetual changes of the subscribers by deaths, removals, &c. have always rendered the income so variable, that it has never been two years together the same."

Robinson's creed was the confession of a youth,

youth, no proper subject for criticism : suffice it, that he believed it true at the time. He enlarged afterwards on each of the articles contained in it, in an Essay on Moderate Calvinism, that is still in possession of the family. I have just glanced my eye over this essay ; it discovers considerable ingenuity, and no small share of learning. An historical and critical examination of the several articles of Calvinism has been made in my Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles *. Concerning them I say nothing here.

* Third part, second edition.

CHAPTER IV.

*From his Settling at Hauxton, in Cambridgeshire, to
a Public Administration of Baptism, at Wittlesford.*

HE soon quitted his friends at Fulbourn, and went to live at Hauxton, an obscure little village a few miles from Cambridge, near the London road. His cottage was small, his income slender; his family soon became numerous *. His literary pursuits also rendered a few books necessary. His mode of living was, therefore, necessarily simple, corresponding to his narrow circumstances. In this humble situation he lived several years.

How Robinson could indeed support himself at this time, may to some appear a matter of surprise: and it is evident he must have received occasional civilities from friends, of which one or two instances are found in his papers. The following letter is inserted, not merely as explaining this matter, but from respect to the memory of an old and esteemed friend of our author's.

* Before he left Hauxton he had nine children to support, besides a wife, and aged mother. One child died here in infancy. In all he had twelve.

DEAR

DEAR SIR,

Herewith I send you the money and pamphlets, value four pounds: the copy bound is for yourself, if there is room on your shelf. The account of your own, and your people's condition gives me much pleasure: may the Lord continue you humble and useful, and settle it in your heart to persevere, labouring in that part of his vineyard he hath placed you in, that many may be your crown and joy in the day of his appearance! You know of my acquaintance coming to town, and as you have the opportunity, should be glad they would extend your intelligence to my advantage, that our knowledge may be mutual. Return my Christian respects to the person you mentioned. We join in remembrance of Mrs. Robinson, and, be assured, I am in expectation of your frequent thoughts of me at the throne of grace, with hearty prayers for you,

Dear Sir, Your real Friend, &c.

BENJAMIN WALLIN.

Benjamin Wallin was the pastor of a congregation at Maze Pond, in Southwark, a man of great worth, author of various theological publications, a particular friend of Robinson in the early part of life.

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The advantages attendant on obscurity, no one better understood to improve than Robinson. Possessed of gentle manners, and a tender heart, of a modest demeanor, and a teachable disposition, he became the idol of the poor, and gained the esteem of all. The following lines, extracted from one of the most beautiful poems in our language *, and written by a most benevolent man, have been so frequently quoted, as to appear almost trite : but returned so strongly to my memory on a late excursion to his modest dwelling at Hauxton, and exhibit so true a picture of Robinson, that I could almost persuade myself, that Dr. Goldsmith's good clergyman was no other than that amiable man.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild,
 There where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
 A man he was to all the country dear;
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year.
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, or wished to change his place.
 Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour:
 Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
 More bent to raise the wretched than to rise:
 His house was known to all the vagrant train;
 He chid their wand'rings, but reliev'd their pain:

* The Deserted Village, by Dr. Goldsmith.

The long remember'd beggar was his guest,
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
 Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
 Sat by his fire and talk'd the night away:
 Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
 Shoulder'd his crutch and shew'd how fields were won:
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe.
 Careless their merits or defects to scan,
 His pity gave ere charity began.
 Thus to release the wretched was his pride,
 And even his failings leaned to virtue's side.

In this agreeable solitude two pursuits, besides a regard to his family, engrossed his attention,—the raising of a congregation, and the advancement of his studies. For the former, Who, by native sweetness, by early associations, by settled habits; could be better fitted? He had little occasion to learn, what some preachers never understand, at least never practise, the art of stooping to the poor; and it was unnecessary for him to study the art of climbing in the church. His manners were unvarnished by the frivolities of a polite education; his heart uninflated by the tumours of false greatness. Unacquainted with the fashionable world, he yet knew mankind; experiments on himself had given him an extraordinary insight in-

to the human character, and into the springs of human conduct. With simplicity of manners, he united a little professional cant: the latter he could practise, on occasion, as well as most men: but the features most strongly expressed on his countenance were those of genius and benevolence: these marked him for a superior man. He possessed in an high degree what charms discerning persons of whatever rank and condition,—“ that politeness, which, as some one prettily expresses it, is an happy mixture of greatness and benignity, the sun-shine from the soul on our words and actions.”

Robinson did not qualify, that is, take the oaths, which dissenting ministers are obliged to take, if they wish to enjoy the benefits of the act of uniformity, till October, 1775. To occasional instances of rudeness he had sometimes been exposed, through his situation near an university: prudence, therefore, instructed him to avail himself of legal security, having been assured, that, by omitting it, he would expose himself to further inconvenience: accordingly, he went to the sessions-house, and took the usual oaths. In 1774, he observes, that had he seen things in the light he did then, he would have run every hazard, rather than have qualified in that manner.

He

He now used to come regularly to Cambridge on the first day of the week with his family, and to preach twice, sometimes, three times. In the middle of the week he delivered lectures in the neighbouring villages, sometimes, morning, as well as evening, except in hay and harvest-times: the catechising of children, also, was a favourite employment. The following places were occasionally supplied with lectures by him during this period: Dry Drayton, Duxford, Foulmire, Foxton, Fulbourn, Granchester, Harston, Haslingfield, Hauxton, Ickleton, Sawston, Stapleford, Fenstanton, Swavefey, Whittlesford, and Wickham-Brook, in Suffolk.

In village teaching he was encouraged and assisted by John Berridge, a methodist clergyman*. This singular man was vicar of Everton in Bedfordshire; in his habits and manners much resembling old bishop Latimer†; having

* Berridge, at the outset of his religious course, published a pamphlet, which gave occasion to two small publications of bishop Green's, entitled, "The Principles and Practice of the Methodists."

Berridge published some years after a singular book, entitled, "The Christian World Unmasked, Pray come and peep."

† See a Letter from Berridge to the countess of Huntingdon, published in 1794, compared with Gilpin's Life of Latimer.

been senior fellow of Clare-hall, and moderator in the public schools, being a man of considerable learning, and condescension, as well as a great humourist, he had obtained extensive esteem and respect: but oppressed with weak nerves and an occasional melancholy, he found repose in a religion of a most peculiar cast. Human wisdom he thought might, sometimes, be made useful, but was more often injurious to a child of grace. He called himself a "Riding Pedlar," because his master, as he used to express himself, employed him to serve near forty shops in the country, besides his own parish.

Among the methodists of his day he became eminent: his talents and learning gave him consideration; his reveries did but increase his popularity; but, what forms the worth of his character, he was an honest man. He had too much the tone of a reformer to be endured in the university, and was now settled on a small college living.

The last time I visited this religious humourist at Everton, "Ah! said he, when Mr. Robinson lived at Hauxton, he was a modest, teachable, and benevolent young man: but he possessed abilities, and grew vain; I thought him a most gracious preacher, but he has forsaken
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the Lord."—Robinson highly valued this old man; but used to say, "I know how to estimate his good qualities, without making myself a simpleton."—Berridge died January 22, 1793. The following epitaph, inscribed on his tomb-stone, was written by himself:

Here lie
The earthly remains of
JOHN BERRIDGE,
Late vicar of Everton,
And an itinerant servant of Jesus Christ,
Who loved his master, and his work;
And after running on his errands many years,
Was caught up to wait on him above.

Reader!

Art thou born again?
[No salvation without a new birth]
I was born in sin February 1716;
Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730;
Lived proudly on faith and works for salvation till 1754;
Admitted to Everton vicarage, 1755;
Fled to Jesus for refuge, 1756;
Fell asleep in Christ, January 22, 1793.

Robinson's occasional labours also were sometimes lightened by the expository lectures of several under graduates, particularly Rowland Hill, now preacher at Surrey-street chapel; Charles De Coetlogon, now minister of the Lock chapel, author of various theological publications; Thomas Pentycrofs, rector of Wallingford, Berkshire, author of a volume of

sermons, and others; all of whom afterwards settled in the national church.

His literary labours during his continuance at Hauxton must have been equal to his ministerial. Here he wrote the Essay already alluded to, which discovers considerable reading; and, Arcana, or the Principles of the Petitioners for relief from Subscription to the thirty-nine Articles: here also he formed the design of translating Saurin's sermons, and printed one or two as specimens.

In one quality he excelled most men: to the most trifling connections he could give a degree of consequence, and from the most untoward situation he could derive improvement: he knew how to convey ideas to the most simple minds, and from the most unpromising acquaintance he could receive advantage. The fastidiousness of ostentatious egotists, who can reap no instruction but from men of letters, as well as the insolence of ambitious triflers, who only pay homage to the great, he treated with the poignancy of ridicule, rather than the bitterness of contempt. Towards the poor his manners shewed a disposition as characteristic of genius as goodness. For, Is not rational man the object of the philosopher's study? And may not moral good be collected from every rank?

rank? Robinson was improving his intellectual powers, and advancing in knowledge, when talking with a day labourer, or rocking the cradle, no less than when studying Latin and Greek, or translating Saurin. But did he despise letters? Was he one of those religious softlings, to borrow a word often made use of by himself, that insult men of literature? No. He cultivated the friendship of such men, and prompted them to discourse on their favourite studies. His simple and modest deportment, his inquisitive and teachable disposition, encouraged them to open their treasures; and while they were delighted by the charms of his converse, he was enriching himself with their discoveries. He might truly say, with Horace,

———— Ego apis Matinæ
 More modoque
 Grata carpentis thyma per laborem
 Plurimum. CARMIN. L. iv. Od. ii.

As the small mountain bees collect
 With daily toil the grateful thyme;
 Thus I more weighty truths select,
 Or crop the flowery sweets of rhyme. D.

Among his papers nothing is found like a regular correspondence at this time, though one or two letters on unimportant subjects seem to intimate, that he had several correspondents. A
 small

small assortment of letters from Whitfield and Thornton carries most of this appearance. By a note from Robinson's valued friend William Nash of Royston, in Cambridgeshire, it appears, that Whitfield intended to be at Cambridge the fifth of that month. Thornton was a Russia merchant, well known among the serious people of those times, (so the methodists called themselves) for his liberality to poor ministers. Thornton's letters relate to favours and letters received from Robinson, and donations sent to him either for his own use, or to be distributed among the poor. The favours received were, most probably, of a spiritual nature. Whitfield's are short letters, describing his own religious campaigns, or holding out encouragement to his young fellow soldier. They exhibit, what all Whitfield's works exhibit, the character of a man possessing few ideas, but of extraordinary energy of character, and of an honest heart.

Robinson for several years baptised publicly at Whittlesford, in the river, agreeably to the practice of many of the baptists. In the year 1767, a public baptism was administered amidst a great number of spectators near the river, in a yard adjoining to the house of Ebenezer Hollick, a wealthy and respectable member of his society.

It

It is hoped, that the following account of this ceremony will not be reckoned an improper digression, when it is recollected, that Robinson was himself a baptist, and that the description may afford amusement, if not instruction, to such readers, whose inquiries have not been directed this way. It is extracted from the History of Baptism, a favourite work of our author's, a more full account of which will be given in its proper place*.

The Administration of Baptism by the English Baptists.

“ Not many years ago at Whittlesford, seven miles from Cambridge, forty-eight persons were baptised in that ford of the river, from which the village takes it's name. At ten o'clock of a very fine morning in May, about fifteen hundred people of different ranks assembled together. At half past ten in the forenoon, the late Dr. Andrew Gifford, fellow of the society of antiquarians, sublibrarian of the British Museum, and teacher of a baptist congregation in Eagle-street, London, ascended a moveable pulpit, in a large open court-yard, near the river, and adjoining to the house of the lord of the manor.

“ Round him stood the congregation; people

* Robinson's "History of Baptism," p. 541.

on horseback, in coaches, and in carts, forming the outside semicircle; many persons sitting in rooms of the house, the shades being open. All were uncovered, and there was a profound silence. The doctor first gave out an hymn, which the congregation sang. Then he prayed for all mankind in general, for the king, queen, royal family, both houses of parliament, the judges, and all civil magistrates, for all ranks, and degrees of men, for the prosperity of true religion, and for a blessing on the present service in particular.

“Prayer being ended, he took out a New Testament and read his text—“I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance.” He observed, “that the force of the prepositions had escaped the notice of the translators, and, that the true reading was: I, indeed baptise you *in* water, *at*, or upon repentance; which sense he confirmed by the forty-first verse of the twelfth of Matthew, and other passages. Then he spoke, as most baptists do on these occasions, on the four parts of his subject. First, on the *nature* of the ordinance, that it was neither a pagan nor Jewish rite, but a New Testament institute, of divine appointment: I, John, by divine commission, baptise you. Secondly, on the *subject*, that it was a believer and not an infant who was incapable of performing what was
requisite

requisite to baptism, faith and repentance; of whom it would be hard to require it, for whom no proxy was appointed, or could be admitted, and to whom no damage could come if he were left without baptism, who could do the church no good, and might do a great deal of harm: I baptise you, who stand here confessing your sins. Thirdly, he observed the *mode*, that it was *dipping*, and not *sprinkling*, which he endeavoured to prove by the meaning of the word baptise, by the places where baptism was administered, and by several other circumstances: I *baptise* or dip you in water. Fourthly, he remarked the *end* of the ordinance, and shewed that it was appointed to express a conscientious belief of the mission of Jesus, and the truth of the Christian religion. He observed, that religion was religion, and nothing else, and ought not to be confounded with civil government, law, learning, war, trade, or any thing else. He closed by contrasting the doctrine of baptism with infant sprinkling. Then the candidates for baptism retired to dress themselves.

“About half an hour after, the administrator, who that day was a nephew of the doctor, and admirably qualified for the work, in a long black gown of fine baize, without a hat, with a small New Testament in his hand, came
down

down to the river side, accompanied by several baptist-ministers and deacons of their churches, and the persons to be baptised. The men came first, two and two, without hats, and dressed as usual, except that, instead of coats, each had on a long white baize gown, tied round the waist with a sash. Such as had no hair wore white cotton or linen caps.

“The women followed the men, two and two, all dressed neat, clean, and plain, and their gowns white linen or dimit. It was said, that the garments had knobs of lead at bottom to make them sink. Each had a long light silk cloak hanging loosely over her shoulders, a broad ribband tied over her gown beneath her breast, and an hat on her head. They all ranged themselves round the administrator at the water-side. A great multitude of spectators stood on the banks of the river on both sides; some had climbed and sat on the trees, many sat on horseback, and in carriages, and all behaved with a decent seriousness which did honour to the good sense and the good manners of the assembly, as well as to the free constitution of this country.

“First, the administrator read an hymn, which the people sang. Then he read that portion of scripture, that is read in the Greek church

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on the same occasion, the History of the Baptism of the Eunuch, beginning at the twenty-sixth verse of Acts ix. and ending with the thirty-ninth. About ten minutes he stood expounding the verses, and then taking one of the men by the hand, he led him into the water, saying, as he went, See here is water, what doth hinder? If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptised. When he came to a sufficient depth he stopped, and, with the utmost composure, placing himself on the left hand of the man, his face being toward the man's shoulders, he put his right-hand between his shoulders behind, gathering into it a little of the gown for hold: the fingers of his left-hand he thrust under the sash before, and the man putting his two thumbs into that hand, he locked all together by closing his hand. Then he deliberately said, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and while he uttered these words, standing wide, he gently leaned him backward and dipped him once.

“ As soon as he had raised him, a person in a boat, fastened there for the purpose, took hold of the man's hand, wiped his face with a napkin, and led him a few steps to another attendant, who then gave him his arm, walked with him to the house, and assisted him to dress.

There were many such in waiting, who, like the primitive susceptors, assisted during the whole service.

“The rest of the men followed the first, and were baptised in like manner. After them the women were baptised. A female friend took off at the water-side the hat and cloak. A deacon of the church led one to the administrator and another from him; and women at the water-side took each as she came out of the river, and conducted her to the apartment in the house, where they dressed themselves. When all were baptised, the administrator, coming up out of the river, and standing at the side, gave a short exhortation on the honour and the pleasure of obedience to the divine commands, and then, with the usual benediction, dismissed the assembly.

“About half an hour after, the men newly baptised having dressed themselves went from their rooms into a large hall in the house, where they were presently joined by the women, who came from their apartments to the same place. Then they sent a messenger to the administrator, who was dressing in his apartment, to inform him, they waited for him. He presently came, and first prayed for a few minutes, and then closed the whole by a short discourse on
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the blessings of civil and religious liberty, the sufficiency of scripture, the pleasure of a good conscience, the importance of an holy life, and the prospect of a blessed immortality.—This they called a public baptism.

“There was a private baptism at Cambridge, in the same month of May. The baptist-congregation there have a small garden walled in, adjoining to their meeting-house. In the middle of this is an oval baptistery with steps at each end. The bath and the steps take up the whole length of the garden, and there is a parlour or vestry at each end, so that, on opening the door of one room, you may either walk round the baptistery, or step directly into it, and passing through it go up to the opposite steps into the opposite room. The baptistery is filled and emptied by a pump and proper pipes.”

Of the nature of private baptisms, the reader may form an opinion from what has been already said; it would, therefore, be unnecessary to dwell on further particulars.

CHAPTER V.

*From the time of building the New Meeting-House,
to that of Robinson's commencing Author.*

A Respectable congregation being now collected at Cambridge, the old meeting-house was pulled down, and a neat building erected, at the expence of the congregation;—a way of erecting meeting-houses at that time rather unusual.

The dissenters have been too much in the habit of raising buildings, and of bringing the churches in general under unreasonable contributions to defray the expenses. This, sometimes, becomes a severe tax on distant congregations, and the houses being unnecessarily large, or too elegantly commodious, do but administer to the vanity of the petitioning party. "Why," Robinson was accustomed to say, "should men run in debt by building a church, any more than by furnishing their dwellings? If they cannot afford a meeting-house, why will not a barn suffice? If they cannot be accommodated with a barn, why will not a room in a poor cottage content them?" He used frequently to lament such improprieties, and always mentioned the conduct of his own society with particular respect.

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The place was purchased of Alderman Halsted, and the best mode of settlement was chosen, that could be thought of, to secure the future liberty of the people. All had a share in the property of the house, as the writings kept by the late Michael Foster, merchant, one of the original trustees, testify. The meeting was conveyed to trustees chosen by the people: and the church for the future is to fill up the trust with men of their own choosing. "The subscribers and purchasers, as well as the present trust," to use Robinson's words, "aimed at no dominion, and will submit to no slavery. They did all they could to secure the same independency to their successors, and wished to inspire them with a just terror of that worst of all animals, a Lord-brother:" what kind of animal that is, dissenting churches well understand.

To record the names of the trustees will appear natural to such, as are not insensible of favours, and of a conviction of true worth. On my joining the dissenters at Cambridge, most of these trustees were then living, and among the oldest of the members: to me most have shewn personal civilities; and such as I was best acquainted with, possessed great virtues.

Their names were as follows: 1. Thomas Brown, of Sawston, deacon, 2. John Fyson,

of Horningsea, farmer, 3. William Dobson, of Trumpington, school-master, 4. Ebenezer Hollick, of Whittlesford, esq. 5. John Gifford, of Shepreth, esq. 6. Richard Foster, of Cambridge, merchant, 7. Joseph Ivatt, of Cambridge, gentleman, 8. Samuel Gifford, of Fenstanton, farmer, 9. Richard Redman, of Stapleford, 10. Thomas Gifford, of Cambridge, carrier, and 11. William Whitby, of Eversden, grocer.

Being now provided with an agreeable meeting-house, and attended by a numerous audience, Robinson was in the road to that reputation which he soon acquired as a speaker: the decency of the building, the more genteel appearance of the congregation, and the abilities of the preacher, soon drew the attention of the academics: many became, from serious motives, regular attendants; but more, from such unsteady dispositions, as usually influence young men, possessing no object of literary pursuit. To speak in the language of the younger part of the university, an attendance at meeting became a pleasant lounge.

By the graduates, Robinson had never been molested; but troublesome visitants, as we have already noticed, were experienced in many under-graduates: till, at length, all regard to decency being dismissed, and the patience of the
congre-

congregation exhausted, the preacher determined to give a public check to their impertinence.

The case alluded to, was that of two young men, of Emanuel college, who, during the time of worship, disturbed the congregation, obliging the people to disperse without concluding the service. Complaints had been frequently made against such improper behaviour, and the matter referred to the proctors and heads of colleges. Redress, though often promised, had never been procured. Robinson, therefore, resolved to obtain satisfaction from the offenders, or to seek it by law. It was proposed by the vice-chancellor, Dr. Richardson, master of Emanuel college, to impose some exercise on the offenders; but, of what avail could this be? Robinson maintained, that, though college-exercises might be a proper correction for the violation of college-duties, they were none for an offence against acts of parliament. He, therefore, insisted that the culprits should pay the fine of fifty pounds, settled by an act of the legislature, or ask pardon in the public papers: the latter course was preferred, though one of the young men, on account of his general good character, was forgiven.

However differently mankind conclude con-

cerning the forms of religion, to those who practise them they are of importance; and to offer insults during their performance, hath always been reckoned the highest indecency. To say no more, What can be conceived more inconsistent with the laws of good manners? Robinson is by no means the first who has taken notice, that university-towns have been, of all others, the most guilty of such improprieties. The same has been observed by the celebrated apologist, Robert Barclay. Of late years, indeed, the condition of the dissenters appearing less disgraceful, gentlemen can afford to treat them with better manners. But in universities there will always be found occasional overflowings of loungers, and coxcombs; and the dissenters have received insults not long since in different parts of the country, though not at Cambridge. This case has, therefore, been brought forward not without design; for, where a meeting-house has been registered in the bishop's court, and the oaths required by law have been taken, the minister or congregation aggrieved is entitled to all the benefits of the act. This should be understood by all parties; and dissenters, circumstanced as above, should rigidly demand the protection of the laws, and all the strictness of justice.

The letter, sent by the dissenters in St. Andrew's

drew's parish to the tutor (Dr. Farmer, now master) of Emanuel college, will to some readers, probably, be agreeable. It shall, therefore, be subjoined.

REVEREND SIR,

Cambridge Dec. 69.

THE trustees for the meeting beg you would accept their warmest thanks for your impartial and generous conduct in regard to your two pupils. In consideration of the general character which you are pleased to give Mr. —, they agree to omit his name in print, and persuade themselves, that you will think it as necessary to expose the other, when the following facts are attended to.

None but an atheist denies the necessity of paying a public homage to the deity; nor will any, but a man blinded with bigotry, deny mankind the liberty of doing it in that way, which appears to each most acceptable to the God he adores. This liberty all the subjects of the British empire enjoy, except the dissenters at Cambridge.

In a profligate seaport-town our dissenting brethren meet without interruption; and gentlemen of both army and navy, occasionally at

our Cambridge meeting, have blushed at the difference. In the most dissolute parts of London, disturbances are unknown in meeting-houses : how mortifying the reflection ! that civility, the offspring of good sense, is met with in sinks of ignorance, which is not to be obtained at a seat of literature !

A gentleman of Mr. Farmer's delicacy and piety will find it difficult to believe half we could tell him on this head. Would you imagine, sir, that we scarcely ever meet without interruptions from the under-graduates ; that every agreeable female in the society is exposed to the same insults as in a bawdy-house ; no pew privileged from a bold intrusion ; no family, however considerable in fortune or credit, from insolent affronts ? Is it credible, that prostitutes should parade our ailes in academic habits ? An unforeseen accident discovered the sex of such a one but a fortnight ago. Is it sufferable, that on reproving these disorders our lives should be threatened ? Let a veil for ever cover these enormities. Nothing induces us to mention them now but the desire of convincing Mr. Farmer, that our lenity has been infamously abused, and, consequently, that it is a duty we owe to the society under our management, vigorously to support prosecution.

To say nothing of our own minister, (a growing love to him, perhaps, makes us partial in his favor) How can we bear to see graduates of our own universities, when they occasionally preach to us, men of learning and piety, put to the blush, not more confounded at the iniquity, than surprised at the novelty of such behaviour? Our American brethren were not at all conciliated to English episcopacy, but on the contrary highly disgusted with it, by the behaviour of the gown at our meeting: one of them protesting "I have preached in England, Scotland, Ireland, in various parts of America, to congregations of all denominations, to polite citizens, and to naked Indians; but never did I see such heathenish impiety during divine service as in the Cambridge under-graduates." In vain we tell them of the learning of some of the members of this university: in vain we proclaim the piety of others: in vain we assure them of the candor of all the graduates: disturbances in devotion strike serious minds too deeply to be easily forgotten.

When national disputes run high; when religious connections form an indissoluble bond among dissenters of all denominations, so that an offence to one is an injury to all; when men of sense are aiming, if not to unite, yet to diminish the distance which a surplice and vice-

vice-book has put between men of the same religion ; Is it prudent to counteract such Christian heroes ? Is it politic to provoke a peaceable people ?

After all, Who does all this ? A set of lads just come from school, who by the vigilance of the masters might be kept, if not obedient to them, at least at a distance from us. To the honour of the university be it spoken, we never received an insult from a graduate. We are too well acquainted, sir, with your deserved character, to imagine any apology needful for this information. Receive it, sir, as an apology for our exposing one of your pupils. We are sorry it happened so, but the present circumstances require it.

Allow us, good sir, to assure you, that we shall ever retain the liveliest gratitude for your extreme civility, and with profound respect are

Your obliged Servants,"

CHAPTER VI.

*An Account of some of Robinson's Publications,
more particularly his Arcana, and Translation
of Saurin's Sermons.*

LEAVING Robinson for a while in the quiet discharge of his pastoral office, and deferring to a future opportunity any remarks on the manner in which he conducted himself in this department, we now propose taking a short view of some of his publications.

In 1770, he printed Two Sermons, translated from the French of James Saurin, protestant preacher at the Hague, as a specimen of a larger work, translations from the same author, which he now had in contemplation, and which he afterwards printed in five volumes 8vo.

In 1772, a Sermon was published by him on the Nature and Necessity of Early Piety, preached to a society of young people at Willingham, Cambridgeshire; this sermon was printed at Cambridge, in 1770, and reprinted at Bristol in 1777. I omit delivering my opinion concerning single discourses, intending to make some remarks hereafter on the general character of all his sermons.

The

The performance that first procured him notice as a writer, was a course of letters to a friend, intitled, *Arcana*, or the first Principles of the late Petitioners to Parliament for Relief in matter of Subscription. These were printed in 1774.

The question concerning the penal statutes, and subscription to articles, had been much canvassed for several years past, by men of the most distinguished talents, and exhibited in the most public form, as well by churchmen, as dissenters. A few particulars it may not be improper to notice.

The commentator on the laws of England had in his celebrated performance delivered opinions*, hostile to liberty, and injurious to the rights of the dissenters. These opinions related to the act of toleration, penal statutes, heresy, the right of a national church, infidels, the act of union, and the test laws. On several passages in the Commentaries, Dr. Priestley had made some remarks†, to which Blackstone replied: the cause was then taken up by Dr. Furneaux, a writer of distinguished abilities ‡.

The

* More particularly in vol. i. sect. iv. vol. iv. sect. iv.

† Remarks, &c.

‡ In a work entitled "Letters to the Honourable Mr. Justice

The learned commentator's positions were by this writer examined with much calmness, and confuted with great dexterity. Blackstone himself, most probably, acknowledged the adroitness of this adversary, for in a subsequent edition he corrected several parts of his work. Many other writers had taken up the same subject.

In the years 1772, and 1773, the dissenters presented petitions to the House of Commons against subscription to the thirty-nine articles, but were unsuccessful in their application; and, what may seem strange, their attempt was, in some measure, over-ruled by persons of their own party.

There would be danger of wandering too far from our subject; otherwise, to one unable to discover superior wisdom in these thirty-nine articles, it might afford no inconsiderable amusement, to display the subject as unfolded at this time in the House of Commons; for, though some of the members spake of them as barriers against scepticism, and as the bulwarks of Christianity, from others they received a less respectable treatment: by the member, who introduced the petition, they were maintained to be

Justice Blackstone, concerning his Exposition of the Act of Toleration, and some Positions relative to Religious Liberty."

"repugnant

“repugnant to common sense;” by another—
 “that those who subscribed them did it with a
 forced interpretation of their own: and, that
 none could be so absurd as to do it for consci-
 ence sake:” others avowed them to be “pal-
 pably ridiculous,” and notoriously false*.

How was this business managed in the other
 house?—As might be expected, where the in-
 terest of twenty-six consecrated peers was con-
 sulted: all the bishops, except one, were de-
 cidedly, and, no doubt, very conscientiously,
 against the principle of the petition. To the
 honour of Green, bishop of Lincoln, let it be
 remembered, that he dared to stand alone;
 though he suffered for his scrupulosity and
 hardihood. When a certain peer mentioned
 his name to the king, who has ever kept the dis-
 senters at an awful distance, and expressed
 his frequent disapprobation of their cause;
 “Green, Green, said this sacred person, he shall
 never be translated.” Accordingly, Green never
 stirred from Lincoln.—But we have wandered.

Robinson had occasion to contemplate
 this subject nearer home: in 1771, Robert
 Tyrwhitt, then fellow of Jesus College, a name

* See this subject very sensibly discussed in a perform-
 ance entitled, *A Chinese Fragment*.

justly revered in the university, and never to be mentioned by the friends of liberty but in terms of respect, had proposed a grace for the abolition of subscription at the time of taking degrees. In the same year, a design was also formed of making application to parliament with similar views by many of the clergy. The most active person in this business was the eminent John Jebb, who had been tutor of Peter House; who for conscience sake resigned the rectory of Homersfield, and vicarage of Flixton, and was distinguished at Cambridge by publishing a comment on those parts of Newton's Principia, that relate to the system of the world; by his zeal in promoting annual examinations; and by his Lectures on the New Testament, on which he published a Harmony*.

The question, therefore, concerning subscription was agitated in such a manner, as to give it a public aspect, in the schools, from the pulpit, and from the press. On the 27th of December 1772, Jebb preached before the university from Acts xv. 10—"Now, therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers, nor we were able to bear?"

Much

* See Dr. Disney's Memoirs of Dr. Jebb. vol. i.—
The worthy memorialist also followed the example of
Dr.

Much opposition had been made to Jebb's plan for annual examinations, by Powell master of St. John's, and to the question concerning subscription, by Hallifax, afterwards bishop of Gloucester, a man who conducted this business with some artifice, and towards Jebb shewed considerable meanness. Hallifax published two superficial sermons on the subject: the futility of his arguments, and the flimsiness of his composition were well exposed by Blackhall, fellow of Emanuel college.

To this important controversy, which now excited the notice of the members of the university, as well as of the dissenters, Robinson was very attentive: and, accordingly, collecting all the old arguments in his mind, but giving a new turn to the controversy, in 1774 he published his course of Letters entitled, *Arcana**, on the following subjects. I. On Candour in Controversy. II. On Uniformity in religion. III. On the Right of Private Judgment. IV. On Civil Magistracy. V. On Innovation. VI. On Orthodoxy. VII. On Persecution. VIII. On

Dr. Jebb; he quitted the church of England, and published, "Reasons for resigning the Rectory of Panton, and Vicarage of Swinderby, in Lincolnshire," in 1782.

* "Arcana, or the Principles of the late Petitioners to Parliament for Relief in the matter of Subscription, in eight Letters to a Friend."

Sophistry.

Sophistry. These letters * possess some peculiarities of spelling, and a few crude expressions, and conceits; but discover, at the same time, great penetration, a lively imagination, and an happy facility of simplifying and illustrating a subject. The question is not examined with reference to doctrine, but to discipline,—a view of the subject best suited to a mind, always inquiring, and always fluctuating; to whom, at length, the lines on Johannes Scotus might be applied.

Quæcunque humani fuerant, jurisque sacratî,

In dubium veniunt cuncta, vocante Scoto†.

Still doubting, reading still the sacred law,

Marking in human creeds the constant flaw.

The Arcana procured our author many valuable friends among the dissenters; who, expressing their surprise at the long obscurity of the writer, began to consider him as a controversialist of growing reputation, qualified to do credit to their principles. Dr. Furneaux always spoke of the work, and of the author, with great respect. In a letter written by Daniel Turner, a respectable baptist minister of Abingdon in

* "Arcana," or, "The Principles of the late Petitioners to Parliament for Relief in the Matter of Subscription, in Eight Letters to a Friend."

† Vid. Pauli Jovii Elogia Virorum doctorum. p. 16.

Berkshire, author of various theological publications, and who will hereafter be frequently mentioned, as the invariable friend to Robinson, are these words: "When I was informed, that the *Arcana* was written by a baptist minister, I replied, no, it cannot be: we have not one amongst us who can write such a book as the *Arcana*."

In 1776 was published by our author, a Sermon entitled, "A Lecture on a becoming Behaviour in Religious Assemblies." This discourse was preached at Cambridge, January 10, 1773, occasioned by interruption given for three or four evenings by undergraduates.

Our author next published, namely in 1775, A Discussion of the Question, "Is it lawful and right for a man to marry the sister of his deceased wife?" a small treatise of seventeen pages, subjoined to the Appendix (containing letters from several divines and others) to the Legal Degrees of Marriage stated and considered, &c. by John Allen, barrister at law, second edition. These strictures were written at the request of two friends, Dr. Samuel Stennett, and John Thompson, persons of respectability among the baptists at that time. The discussion is judicious. The side of the question taken by Robinson, is the affirmative; the editor's opinion of their merit may be collected from

from the following extract addressed to our author.

“ REVEREND SIR, *Watford, Aug. 18, 1775.*

“ Impressed with gratitude for the very great favor you have done me at the request of the Reverend Dr. Stennett and Mr. Thompson, I cannot but, in the first instance, return you my thanks for your *Strictures on Affinite Marriages*, which (though I abhor flattery, yet) I must say, are exceedingly sensible and conclusive in favor of such alliances.

“ I must not conclude without adding, that I have lately had an opportunity of laying Fry’s and Allen’s book, with several of the letters I have mentioned, before the right honourable lord Hyde, chance’lor of the duchy of Lancaster, who has entered deep into the subject, and who has been pleased to say, that he is very clear, that there is not the least degree of moral turpitude in such alliances, and, that, if it is brought into the house, he will vote for it. His lordship has since had a visit from some of the heads of the houses of your university, to whom he mentioned the subject, who declared their sentiments to be the same with his lordship’s, and, that they wished such relief might be granted. Since when I received a letter from Mr. J. Harris, who is member

for Christ-Church Surry, and, I think, secretary to the queen: he says the same in a letter he has honored me with, and adds, that such alliances in many cases are productive of much good. He is a gentleman well-known in the learned world.

“ I have also received the sentiments of two of the bishops who have promised to vote in favor of it, and in particular the bishop of London, who is also for it, and the bishop of Lincoln, who is very strongly for it, and has promised, if it is brought into the house, his vote, and all his support and interest, and added, that such is the reasonableness of the affair, that he apprehends there will not be much opposition to it in the house.”

It is now time to consider the celebrated Saurin's Sermons, two of which, translated by our author, were published in 1770; and in 1775, an entire first volume appeared: the other three volumes followed afterwards, the last in 1782. In 1784 a new edition of the four volumes was printed for Lepard in Newgate street, with an additional volume, and a dissertation by Monsieur Dumont on the madness of David *. To

* Saurin published in all twelve volumes of sermons and other works, the most considerable of which is entitled Discourses,

To Saurin Robinson was much indebted as well for his great facility of composition, and ease of delivery, as that brilliancy of sentiment which so eminently distinguished him as a preacher. It may not, therefore, be improper to observe, that James Saurin was a French refugee, who, with a great number of his countrymen, retired into Holland from the persecutions of France and became a popular preacher at the Hague. In this beautiful village, the states-general, ambassadors and envoys of foreign courts, a great number of nobility, gentry, and of French refugees, had their residence. Here also was a spacious palace belonging to

Discourses, Historical, Critical, and Moral, on the most Memorable Events of the Old and New Testaments. In a MS. volume on Jewish Antiquities of the late learned Philip Doddridge's, which I have seen at Northampton, Doddridge speaks of Saurin as uniting in himself the several qualities of the scholar, the gentleman, and the divine, and as one of the most distinguished of mankind. That Saurin possessed brilliant talents, considerable learning, and very commanding powers of eloquence, shall be admitted : but do not his sermons display, frequently, an air of literary ostentation ? Are not his reasonings, sometimes, too metaphysical for a public assembly, and yet his discourses, not seldom, too flashy and declamatory for a profound reasoner ? His acquaintance with subjects of Christian theology was certainly extensive : but with respect to the Christian Scriptures, his critical knowledge seems to have been inaccurate, and his judgement of men and speculative opinions will be deemed by many erroneous.

the princes of Orange, the chapel of which was assigned to the refugees for a place of worship ; Saurin was appointed the pastor. His doctrine was that of Calvin ; his church government presbyterian. The agreeable peculiarities of the place, and the distressing circumstances of the refugees, conspired to call forth the best exertions of this ingenious man.

The following extract from one of Saurin's sermons will afford a specimen of his style, and of the abilities of the translator. The author is speaking of religious people, who, in times of public calamities, can indulge themselves in shameful gratifications. "The people of whom we speak, these pious people, these people who love their salvation, these people who pretend to the glory of being proposed for examples, can, in times of the deepest distress, when the church is bathed in tears, while the arm of God is crushing our brethren and allies, when the same terrible arm is lifted over us ; when we are threatened with extreme miseries, when the scourges of God are at our gates, when there needs only the arrival of one ship, the blowing of one wind, the wafting of one blast, to convey pestilence and plague into our country ; these people can O God, open their eyes that they may see."

Prefixed to these volumes of translated sermons, are dissertations, much admired by most denominations of believers. The Memoirs of the Reformation in France, and the Life of the Reverend James Saurin, display that dignity of sentiment, and command of language, which are the characteristic excellences of historic composition, and prove, that, if Robinson's mind had been less occupied, and distracted by multifarious pursuits, and if his attention had been confined to this species of writing, he might have obtained one of the first places among English historians : and in one branch of ecclesiastical history he may challenge the very first : of which more hereafter. The small picture of the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth, one of the most eventful æras in the French history, and the horrors attending the revocation of the edict of Nantz, are painted in strong colours ; our author's concluding remark is important,—
 “ Lewis the Fourteenth was on the pinnacle of glory at the conclusion of the peace of Nimeguen ; his dominion was, as it were, established over all Europe, and was become an inevitable prejudice to neighbouring nations, but here he began to extirpate heresy, and here he began to fall, nor has the nation ever recovered its grandeur since.”

The history of France exhibits the monster
 G 4 despotism

despotism in its full growth, and in its most enfeebled condition; it unfolds a truth which the tyrants of Europe wish unknown, that governments which through wantonness of power are the most violent and oppressive, are, when attacked, the most helpless and insufficient. France, during her struggles in the late revolution, has, in a manner, converted these truths into axioms.—But to return.

Men of talents, particularly if their dispositions are benevolent, or their circumstances necessitous, frequently become the tools of frivolous and superficial characters.

Saurin's Sermons, from the originality of their sentiment, and the splendor of their diction, as well as from their being little known to English readers, have rendered essential service, as well to court, as to popular preachers. The translator of Saurin, likewise, possessing brilliant abilities, having long followed the turn and humours of theological controversy, commanding a flowing language, unincumbered with pre-ferment, having also a numerous family, and being an easy good-natured man, could have rendered important assistance to divines: many compliments were, therefore, paid him by some of these men, "for his elegant and useful translation," and liberal proposals were made him
for

for original compositions, or for translations of Saurin, not yet presented to the public. Five guineas a sermon were offered him by an Irish dignitary, and other proposals were submitted to his consideration by an English prebendary. Instances might be produced of a modern right reverend person, strongly soliciting the favour of a sermon, and of a very orthodox divine forestalling a part of Saurin's Translation, confidentially entrusted to him; which he inserted in a publication of his own. These circumstances, unimportant in themselves, are mentioned, merely to represent the high opinion that was now entertained of Robinson.

Whether the sermon so importunately requested by Beadon, bishop of Gloucester, was for his own use, or for the service of a friend, it is unnecessary to inquire: or whether for one divine to preach another divine's sermon be consistent with the dignity of the sacred character, or an affair of perfect indifference, is not worthy of a serious discussion. Robinson always spoke of this man, as a person of amiable manners, and of liberal sentiments: he knew him to be determined on preferment, but thought him "too enlightened to be a bishop." On hearing of his advancement to a mitre, he archly remarked, "He is no fitter to be a bishop, than I am."

Robinson

Robinson had been applied to by many a younker in the University, as he expresses himself, for occasional sermons; but with their requests he never complied; the courtly address, and the elegant sollicitation of a dignitary he could not so easily resist. Among his papers are found one or two sermons, composed for a dignified person, of far too accommodating a character for one of his non-conformist habits. But, though poor, he was scrupulous, and made few compliances of this kind. How far, indeed, it was consistent with the rigid principles of a dissenter to compose sermons to be preached in the episcopal church, became, at length, an affair of conscience with him; and to come to a final determination he took the advice of several reverend casuists of his own denomination.

In the following extract of a letter from his worthy friend, Dr. Evans, late president of the Bristol academy, there is something humorous and diverting. "But, seriously, I see no harm in the world, in your making consecration sermons, if you can get any one to preach them: if our parsons here would but preach what I could compose for them, I would work night and day, but I would serve them with better husks, than they feed their flocks with now. —But "the prostitution of the word of God!" —"Wherein

—“Wherein if you make an honest scriptural sermon? If, indeed, you trim, and turn high-churchman, you will be criminal indeed.

“What said my brave Ferdinando?

Can a man do more than he can do?”

If he cannot storm the fortrefs of hierarchy, let him sap it: if he cannot overthrow it, let him undermine it: in other words, if he cannot openly preach in their cathedrals against it, in propria personâ, let him do it by proxy. I see no harm in promoting the advancement of one of low principles: you may be the means of promoting a young Laud; and as I think, none of us should scruple to preach a visitation or consecration sermon, would the bishops permit us, I see no reason why we should scruple to make one to be preached; after all, you must judge.”

This subject must not be dismissed without an observation on Robinson's sentiments at this period.—Saurin's divinity was strictly orthodox, according to the sense of the French protestants; that is, it embraced a Trinity of divine persons in the Godhead, the doctrines of absolute predestination, and final perseverance, as explained by Calvin, and the presbyterian form of church-government. His opinions concerning rites, discipline, and ministers, possess

possess all the solemnity of orthodoxy, and all the precision of system.

The translator, also, was unquestionably a sincere doctrinal Calvinist, when he first undertook to give an English dress to his favourite preacher. But in the year 1784, when he printed the fifth volume of Saurin, he enters a protest against any hasty conclusions concerning his own sentiments; and, indeed, he professes not to believe all the opinions delivered in those volumes. The avowed difference, it is true, relates merely to rites, to discipline, and to ministers: but, whether his real persuasions, or secret doubts, might not regard more important doctrines, it would be hazardous either to assert, or to deny. When people profess their belief in systems, whether philosophical, metaphysical, political, or theological, where acknowledged errors are concealed among acknowledged truths, it is fair to ask them, What part of the system do you mean? It is no uncommon thing for men, to conceal their disapprobation of public systems by an open declaration against their less important parts. How far this might be the case with our author, as low down as the year 1784, the readers are left to determine.—But Calvin himself was dexterous * in

* Vid. Calvini Institut. l. i. c. xiv. f. 1.

finding ingenious expedients, to solve theological difficulties. The preceding are the only publications of our author's, to be noticed in this stage of his history.

It may not, however, be improper to observe, that, in the years 1773, 1774, and 1775, he bestowed a very particular attention on the history of the nonconformists, or of those ministers of the church of England, who were ejected from their livings, or silenced by the Act of Uniformity. It appears from papers communicated to his esteemed friend, Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, editor of that most valuable performance, the Nonconformists' Memorial*, that this work was much indebted

* The complete title of this work is as follows: "The Nonconformists' Memorial, being an Account of the Ministers, who were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration; particularly by the Act of Uniformity, which took place on Bartholomew-day August 24, 1662: containing a concise View of their Lives and Characters, their Principles, Sufferings, and Printed Works, originally written by the Reverend and Learned Benjamin Calamy, D. D. Now Abridged and Corrected, and the Author's Additions inserted, with many further particulars, and new Anecdotes, by Samuel Palmer: to which is Prefixed an Introduction containing a brief History of the Times in which they lived, and the Grounds of their Nonconformity."—Among the persons to whom this work is indebted, Samuel Palmer speaks of our Author as follows: "the Reverend

indebted to Robinson. Numerous inaccuracies were pointed out by him in all the volumes of the original work, and much interesting and new information was communicated to the last edition. These are inserted in their respective places, and proper acknowledgements made to Robinson.

Indeed, the interesting part, taken by our author, in the history of the Nonconformists, his residence near an University, which afforded him a ready access to books little known; his acquaintance with college registers, (for he and Robotham, a dissenting minister of Cambridge, examined with great attention every particular book of each college) rendered him a kind of nonconformists' repository. The Dissenters' Church-book alluded to, p. 35, of these Memoirs, written, as before mentioned, by Robinson in 1774, if published, would make an entertaining little performance.

Reverend Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, who has with great care examined the Registers of Inductions to livings in Cambridgeshire, and communicated many valuable corrections and additions." This writer is author of other publications, one of which, *The Protestant Dissenters' Catechism*, is more particularly interesting to all dissenters.

CHAPTER VII.

An Account of various Schemes of Benevolence.

OUR author now lived at Chesterton, a village about two miles from Cambridge. He removed there in June 1773, to an house, the property of Richard Rose, a minor.

It would be no less agreeable, than instructive, to survey his rural economy, and domestic arrangements in this new situation: the versatility of his genius was uncommon: and whether he was making a bargain, repairing an house, stocking a farm, giving directions to workmen, or assisting their labours, he was the same invincible man, displaying no less vigour in the execution of his plans, than ingenuity in their contrivance. The readiness with which he passed from literary pursuits to rural occupations, from rural occupations to domestic engagements, from domestic engagements to the forming of plans for dissenting ministers, to the settling of churches, to the solving of cases of conscience, to the removing of the difficulties of ignorant, or the softening of the asperities of quarrelsome brethren, was surprising.

His

His character, as a farmer, shall be considered at a future opportunity: it is here intended to contemplate him, as a philanthropist.

Of his schemes of benevolence many are ingenious, others eccentric, and some useful. More theories were formed by him, than he could reduce to practice; and many, it is probable, only struggled, as it were, for birth, and were never produced even on paper.

Those, of which any traces are left may be divided into three classes: 1. such as relate to churches; 2. such as relate to literature; 3. such as relate to mere humanity. The delineation of his character as a preacher shall be deferred to that period, when my acquaintance with him commenced. This seems the proper place to survey those labours of love, which he always considered an essential part of a minister's duty.

Indeed, though he could never have gained that eminent rank as a public speaker, without much previous labour, yet, by a regular course of reading, and by a sober continuity of reflection, he had stored his mind with such a rich variety of ideas, and, by the habit of addressing public assemblies, had acquired such a facility of communicating them, that he ever considered

considered preaching, in the popular acceptation of the word, as the easiest part of a minister's duty. Accordingly, our teacher devoted a considerable portion of his time to such regulations, as regard the economy of churches, and are more particularly interesting to dissenting congregations. It should be added, that he knew how to govern such assemblies as well as most men, though the mode adopted by him, few have practised with equal success.

During an early period of his ministry at Cambridge, he drew up a pastoral letter that may be seen in the Appendix *, and no apology will be necessary for its insertion. Various treatises have been written by him on church-government, and few men have handled this subject with equal dexterity: a subject, fertile with violent claims, and humiliating concessions, solemn altercations, and bitter animosities. From the ancient, ridiculous, and probably, spurious writings of "the apostolical fathers†," as well as from the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, may be gathered, how very

* No. II.

† See more particularly the Epistles ascribed to Ignatius and Clement. Even the first epistle of the latter, and for the authenticity of the former no one in these times contends, betrays the character of a spiritual governor.

soon Christians over-awed the reason, and enslaved the consciences of mankind; and subsequent ages have proved, that the course of church power is not retrograde.

——— *Malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum,
Mobilitate viget, viresque acquirit eundo:
Parva metu primo, mox sese attollit in auras;
Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.*

VIRGIL, *ÆNEID.* l. 4. v. 174.

No swifter ill, or more replete with woes:
Vigorous she moves, and strengthens as she goes:
First small through fear, she soon dilates her size,
And tempts, with giant strides, the distant skies. D.

Our author's unsophisticated sentiments on this subject, written at a very early period of his ministry, may be seen by the hints in the Appendix. They prove, that, in his estimation, church discipline should be an arrangement of wise maxims, and of benevolent regulations, as well to relieve the wants, as to promote the instruction, of mankind.

His attempt to unite people of discordant opinions deserves the highest commendation; and at the meetings of ministers and delegates from congregations of the baptist denomination, he, for many years, held a conspicuous place. Of such associations, indeed, in the
mid-

mid-land counties he seems to have been the original founder. His sermons charmed the hearers, his agreeable and edifying conversation the delegates, and his pastoral letters the particular societies. But, in the end, his friend Dr. Evans's remark was found too true: "I fear, said he, the more we associate, the more we shall quarrel."

Robinson's association-letters have been much admired; and, as these pages will probably fall into the hands of such as are unacquainted with the economy of dissenting churches, as well as of the dissenters themselves, no apology, it is hoped, will be thought necessary for inserting one in the Appendix *, though published before.

But the exercise of the benevolent affections is more conspicuous in attempts to alleviate the distresses of our fellow-creatures, than in forming schemes to direct their consciences. What is an union of religious sentiment, unaccompanied with the moral virtues, unallied to the generous passions? It may be founded on the mere irritation of gross selfishness, or an ambition to govern superior minds; on the intolerance of a narrow bigotry, or the dreams of sacerdotal ignorance. Robinson knew, that to

* No. III.

conquer the human heart, you must attack it by goodness. He wished not to form cold devotees, but affectionate Christians. The materials, with which he worked, may be seen in the proper place*. They may furnish important hints to benevolent readers, more particularly to dissenting ministers.

To pursue him at this period through all his generous movements, forming religious societies, arranging their discipline, settling their disputes, advising and assisting their ministers, would be endless: what, therefore, might be observed concerning particular congregations, shall be passed over: it will appear by the proper reference†, that the care of all the churches began to interest his heart. He took great pains to ascertain their exact numbers, their distinguishing sentiments, and their various circumstances. No one could devote himself with greater ardour, and more unaffected sincerity, to their distinct interests, both as a controversial writer, and as an occasional friend; and, for many years, no one enjoyed a larger portion of their esteem. It may not be uninteresting to church-men, as well as to dissenters, to pursue the statement made out by John Thompson, a respectable dissenting minister of Clap-

* Appendix, No. IV.

† Appendix, No. V.

ham, well known for his accurate knowledge of the dissenters' history, and, for many years, Robinson's intimate friend.

But his acquaintance with the dissenting ministers and churches in Cambridgeshire, and the neighbouring counties, was more particularly intimate, and more generally extensive. From the pastor of each of the congregations in Cambridgeshire he procured an authentic account of every particular society*; and, indeed, of some he was himself the founder. For many years he was a kind of father to their young ministers, a generous friend to their poor, and the idol of all their assemblies.

Merely to gratify curiosity on subjects of little moment, argues a narrow mind: and when a preacher reckons over the number of his disciples, what is he doing? Perhaps only indulging the vanity of his own heart. Of the latter passion Robinson had his portion: but he appears to have been principally influenced by considerations of utility, and animated by motives of generosity. As early as the year 1771, he used, it seems, to preach lectures regularly in the villages adjacent to, and several miles distant from, Cambridge. To this prac-

* Appendix, No. VI.

tice we have already had occasion to allude: an employment, to which his talents were admirably adapted; in which his heart greatly delighted. In this way he delivered those sixteen discourses, so much admired in dissenting churches, that have been called village sermons.

An object, that he kept invariably in his eye, was to unite the different congregations in one bond of fraternal union. This point he pursued with the subtlety of a speculatist, and the ardour of an enthusiast: his reading, his observations, and, if I may so speak, his experiments, were all directed to this favourite subject: but his success was partial, and in the event, he was doomed to experience much disappointment and severe mortification: he was for an union of love, most of the churches, for an agreement in doctrine and discipline. For several years, however, as he espoused their theological sentiments, they were proud of his connection; but revolting at last from the standard of orthodoxy, he was less acceptable in their societies; and found by severe experience, that religious associations partake of all the bad passions of the men who compose them.

In the Appendix may be seen a letter to the particular baptist-churches, at Cambridge*,

signed by a John Stanford, which to some readers may be uninteresting, particularly, when they are informed that John Stanford was by profession in no higher a walk in life, than that of a shoe-maker. Why, reader, shouldst thou smile? The same character that urges thee to ridicule, will dispose others to seriousness. Robinson ever held it a maxim, that, in societies mostly composed of poor persons, one or more of the officers should be chosen from the lowest class. "Such," he would say, "have a more intimate acquaintance with the wants of the poor, and possess more of the spirit of sympathetic tenderness." In the original founding of the society, the independence of the inferior members was carefully provided for. The meeting-house was raised by means of contributions raised amongst the members; the richer voted a sum to enable the poor to become subscribers: it was not above eighteen-pence a piece,—a small sum, but enough to entitle them to the pleasure of subscribing, and to give them a kind of property in the house.

"Great pains," says Cicero, "should be taken to answer the claims of all mankind; but where the case becomes a matter of dispute, we should imitate the conduct of Themistocles, who, on being consulted whether he should bestow his daughter on a good man, though poor,

poor, or on a less worthy man, though rich;
"I," said he, "prefer a man without money, to
money, without a man."

In the preceding chapter, we have only
touched on such schemes of benevolence, as
were adapted to the circumstances of dissenting
societies: such as embrace the promotion of
literature, or the common interests of philan-
thropy, will fall into their proper places.

CHAPTER VIII.

Robinson's Plea for the Divinity of Christ.

OF a controversy concerning subscription to the thirty-nine articles, an account has already been given: a subject then considered rather as a question, regarding civil and religious liberty, than the doctrines of Christianity. But, from whatever cause, the men most averse to subscription, are usually less tenacious of orthodoxy: a doctrinal turn was, therefore, given to the controversy, and the divinity of Christ underwent a public discussion.

Among the petitioning clergy, a few men appeared, who afterwards conscientiously quitted their preferments, and discovered considerable zeal in opposing the popular doctrine. Of these the most conspicuous was Theophilus Lindsey, who resigned the vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire, and wrote an "Apology for his Conduct;" and John Jebb, who also published "Reasons for Resignation." In these pamphlets arguments were adduced against the divinity of Christ. In this dispute Dr. Samuel Hallifax, professor of civil law, and successively Bishop of Gloucester and St. Asaph, came

came forward, but appeared to little advantage; Hallifax was but moderately acquainted even with the civil law; as a reasoner he was very feeble, and as a divine flimsy and superficial. His conduct also was said to be disingenuous*; and the opposite party triumphed over the insufficiency of their adversary. Hallifax now retired from the field, when Robinson, taking up the gauntlet, published, "A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in a Pastoral Letter addressed to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Cambridge," maintaining, that "Jesus Christ was truly and properly God." In proof of this he exhorts his brethren to attend to the following directions.

"First, To consult the language of the new testament, and compare it with the state of the pagan world at the time of it's publication. Secondly, to compare the style of the new testament with the state of the Jews at the time of it's publication. Thirdly, to compare the perfections which are ascribed to Jesus Christ in the scriptures, with those which are ascribed to God. Fourthly, to consider the works that

* This is not mentioned in reference to Robinson, with whom Hallifax was for some time intimately acquainted, but to Dr. Jebb: for an account of which see "Dr. Disney's Memoirs of Jebb," Vol. I.

are ascribed to Jesus Christ, and compare them with the claims of Jehovah. Fifthly, to consider that worship, which the scriptures claim for Jesus Christ. Sixthly, to observe the application of old testament passages which belong to Jehovah, and to try whether they could acquit the writers of the new testament of misrepresentations, on supposing that Jesus is not God. Seventhly, to examine whether events have justified that notion of Christianity, which the prophets gave their countrymen of it, if Jesus be not God. Eighthly, that if Jesus Christ be not God, they will be obliged to allow that Mahomet has written more clearly on the nature of Christ, than the apostles have; and that the Turks, who reject the gospel, have clearer notions of the nature of Jesus Christ, than Christians who receive and study it. Lastly, to consider what numberless passages of scripture have no sense, or a very absurd one, if Jesus Christ be a mere man."

The doctrine is discussed under each of these points of view, in a popular form; and notes are subjoined to the pamphlet for his more learned readers.

The Plea is written with considerable ingenuity: the style is somewhat polished, and the temper

temper of the author apparently candid, and liberal. Accordingly, a profusion of compliments followed the publication, as well from several dignitaries of the church, as from the dissenters. Dr. Hinchcliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, Dr. Hallifax, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. Goddard, Master of Clare Hall, Dr. Ogden, Woodwardian Professor, Dr. Cooke, Provost of King's College, Dr. Beden, now Bishop of Gloucester, at that time public orator, Dr. Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, and many others, courted his acquaintance: and it was pretty generally agreed, that the Plea was the best defence of the divinity of Christ, that had been published: this also was the opinion of William Hey, brother of Dr. Hey, of Sydney college, who himself appeared in this dispute, and, in the judgement of many, to great advantage.

Was it not to be lamented that such fine talents should be buried in obscurity? That a man of such distinguished abilities, and surrounded with so numerous a family, should not have a decent provision? Would it not even promote the interest and reflect honour on the liberality of the church, to receive into her bosom so amiable a man, and so successful a disputant? Certainly. Handsome proposals were, therefore, readily made him, but were modestly,

modestly, though firmly, rejected. On Dr. Ogden's addressing him, "Do the dissenters know the worth of the man?" Robinson replied; "The man knows the worth of the dissenters."

Robinson, however, continued for several years in an agreeable intercourse with these men, and received from them occasional civilities, more particularly from the Bishop of Peterborough. Handsome compliments, likewise, were paid our author by the ministers of his own persuasion, particularly Dr. Stennett, Dr. Evans, Daniel Turner, and several others of the moderate Calvinists.

Many also of different denominations were not backward in their expressions of respect. His friend John Thompson, in a letter, dated Feb. 13, 1776, speaking concerning some of the more eminent among the independent ministers, remarks, "I have read your Plea with singular pleasure, but not more than I expected to receive from it. Every thing you write never fails to entertain and delight me. I cannot help joining with Dr. Furneaux and Dr. Kippis, in requesting you, when you have finished Saurin, never to spend your time in any more translations; they say it is a great pity that a man who hath such singular talents and abilities for original composition, should be
lost

lost to the republic of letters, by wasting them in translations. Dr. Furneaux dined with me to-day, and a few minutes before dinner, I put your Plea into his hands; he had just time to read five or six pages, from whence, he said, he could form a judgement of the whole, which he will purchase as soon as ever he finds it in town; but he has charged me, with his compliments to you, to tell you that you are not fit to translate."

These flattering testimonies were followed, however, by circumstances of a more mortifying nature.

With the rigidly orthodox, the divinity of Christ is a fundamental in Christianity, and the belief of it essential to salvation. "The temper of the Plea", says Robinson, in a letter to a friend, "has procured me a deal of blame from the good folks, who inhabit the torrid zone. I wish people, continues he, would renounce their disposition to damn mankind."

The truth is, the orthodox thought, that Robinson held this weighty doctrine with too loose an hand; his candour in controversy was considered by them as an unscriptural moderation; and they even questioned the sincerity of his belief. While the Unitarians, so his opponents

call themselves, thought, that he appeared rather as a flourisher of his pen, than as a serious and weighty disputant ; that he aimed rather to display his agility, than to secure a triumph ; that his book was assertion without proof ; an ostentation of theological knowledge without an acquaintance with scripture-criticism. " Indeed," says Theophilus Lindsey, " The author, here examined, has seldom given himself the trouble of doing any more than barely to bring together texts of scripture without explaining them, or even shewing how they apply to his purpose in proving Jesus Christ to be truly and properly God, presuming, that it would be granted at first sight, and upon his authority, that they prove the point for which he assigns them : so that the title of this tract of mine might with very great propriety have been, ' An Explanation of all the Texts of Scripture produced by Mr. Robinson in proof of the Divinity of Christ.' How far it may afford any thing new or useful, the reader will judge*."

Robinson's Plea and Lindsey's Examination exhibit as clear a view of the controversy respecting Christ's divinity, as any publications on that question: and the reader who wishes to examine the merits of the controversy,

* See an Examination of Mr. Robinson's Plea. By Theophilus Lindsey, M. A. formerly Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

would do well to give them both a perusal. That Lindsey should direct his most serious thoughts, and all his critical skill, to this dispute, might reasonably be expected. The subject had been professedly investigated by him in a course of long enquiry ; he was among the foremost of the petitioning clergy, and had been particularly solicited to it by some of his friends, and challenged to it by his opponents.

Robinson was considerably hurt by the temper of Lindsey's publication. " The Plea " is treated as a superficial performance, and the author himself did not escape without some expressions of asperity, by no means congenial to the gentle manner of his opponent, and his usual method of conducting a controversy. To Robert Tyrwhitt of Jesus college, who published two sermons on the Creation of all things by Jesus Christ, Robinson has expressed himself thus : " Some people handle their opponents sharply, but the temper of your pamphlet is gentle, yet judicious, and I am willing to be convinced."

The author of the Plea was much solicited to reply to Lindsey's Examination, more particularly as his opponents carried themselves like masters of the field, and expressed the language of triumph : but Robinson made no reply :
which

which was to many a matter of surprise, hearing, that Robinson had frequently been called upon for his defence, in letters from friends, Daniel Turner, Dr. Evans, Dr. Toulmin; and from the press, by Dr. Priestley and others, recollecting, also, that he himself had said, "if ever he discovered his deception, he would retract his error." We shall make a remark or two on this subject in a subsequent chapter. The following reasons are assigned by Robinson, in a letter, for not answering the Examination. "I do not intend to answer the anonymous examiner*. He hath not touched my arguments, and his spirit is bitter and contemptuous. His faith stands on criticisms: and my argument is, that if the doctrine require critical proof, it is not popular, and therefore not divine. Yes! they will have the last word, and let them."

It falls not within the province of Biography to settle theological disputes. My opinion of this controversy, without reference, indeed, to Robinson's publication, as well of the doctrines, as of the criticisms that support them, may be seen in the third part of my "Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the thirty-nine Articles." As to Robinson, without going into the merits of the Plea, or an examination of his sentiments, I cannot help expressing a persuasion, with which even his orthodox friends

* No author's name appeared to the first edition.

will, I doubt not, agree, that his mind had a kind of elasticity that burst from the severe rules of theological precision: to speak the truth, Robinson had read much on this subject, but was less qualified to write on it, than some of his brethren, who, if less ingenious, were more orthodox: and if the style and temper of the publication be excepted, less originality distinguishes it than many of his admirers suppose. He has evidently too closely copied his favourite Saurin, and Monf. Abbadie*, another eminent French protestant, the latter of whom also borrowed his plan from Bullinger.

But some have asked, " Was Robinson's mind clear from embarrassment when he wrote this Plea? I think not. Among his papers, is the Second Edition of the Letter to Dr. Hallifax, written by Mr. Blackhall, printed at Cambridge, prior to Robinson's publication, viz. in 1772. This pamphlet contains marginal notes in Robinson's hand-writing, which afford ample testimony that his idea of the nature of Jesus Christ was unfetled. In page the twentieth of that pamphlet, where Blackhall says to Hallifax, " But you go on to prove that infinite knowledge is predicated of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, in the same manner as of the Father*." " The Son knoweth all things †.

* Letter to Dr. Hallifax, &c. p. 20.

† John, xvi. 30.

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"He needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man*." In a marginal note, Robinson remarks, "Do these passages prove the latter?" So again, page 22 of the same letter, where Blackhall says, "Our next consideration is the attribute of power: even so the Son quickeneth whom he will†." Robinson adds in a marginal note, "Power is one thing, underived power another." Numerous and indisputable testimonies to the wavering state of our author's mind might be produced from these marginal notes: the worthy Lindsey's unusual tartness must, therefore, be ascribed to some secret suspicion; that his antagonist was not in sober earnest; and that, under a profession of the most amiable moderation, he rather desired to court the applause of both parties, than to close with either. Many of the strictest trinitarians, as well as the opposite party, thought Lindsey acted in consistency with his principles: and were rather disposed to apologise for Robinson, than to censure him, to say of him as Thuanus remarks of Erasmus,

———Homo fuit atque humanus Erasmus‡.

Erasmus was a man, though frail, yet mild.

The letters that were exchanged by Robinson, Lindsey, and Jebb, in consequence of the

* John, ii. 25.

† John, v. 21.

‡ See Jortin's Life of Erasmus.

Plea, cannot but afford pleasure to our readers.

TO THE REV. MR. LINDSEY.

FORGIVE a stranger to your person, but an admirer of your virtue, for intruding into your presence. Your liberal sentiments on religious liberty, and your voluntary resignation of emoluments for conscience sake, have obtained you, sir, and will continue to obtain you, the esteem of all good men, who are not blinded by prejudice and party. If instances so rare be treated with contempt by a degenerate age, present peace, and future prospects, will more than compensate the sufferers. The same conscientious regard to truth, which has induced you to object to the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ in print, has induced me to attempt a defence of it, however unequal to the service. Your virtue, sir, has given your arguments consideration, and it seemed to me impracticable to consider the arguments without naming the person. For this reason, I beg your acceptance of a pamphlet, which the bookseller has orders to deliver; and let me bespeak your forgiveness, sir, if any word unfriendly to your person, character, or integrity, has fallen from the author. May he who seeth not as man seeth, pity our frailty, accept our services; and what we know not, may he teach us!

us! With the most ardent wishes for your present, and future felicity, I beg leave to subscribe myself, reverend sir,

Your Affectionate

R. ROBINSON.

REVEREND SIR,

I Take an early opportunity of acknowledging a very obliging letter received yesterday, which was followed to-day by a present of your book, for which I thank you ; and, before I read it, throughout, will venture to pronounce, that one whose heart could dictate the letter you have favoured me with; can never say any thing in the defence of his own sentiments, that I, or any one, ought to be displeased with. That inquisitive and ingenious men should continue to differ so widely on such a subject, is a continual call, sir, to that candour and moderation towards each other, of which you are so studious to set the example. I am, sir, with very sincere respect,

Your Affectionate Humble Servant,

T. LINDSEY.

TO THE REV. MR. JEBB.

February 5, 1776.

GIVE me leave to thank you for the present of your late publication. The generous principles of the author will increase the esteem of

all good men for him. On the coming out of that piece, which attacked a doctrine that many of the author's admirers conscientiously held, I found some retaining the doctrine, and condemning its opponent, and others questioning the truth of the doctrine in compliance to the acknowledged merit of its opponent. I thought both sides wrong; and supposed it my duty to shew both parties reasons for retaining the doctrine, and venerating the man who denied it. The pamphlet that accompanies this, and which begs your acceptance, contains these reasons. How forcible, each must judge. As the argument obliged me to mention you by name, I brought the manuscript to town before it went to press, to shew you, in order to your striking out any thing relating to yourself, which might appear unfriendly; unhappily, you was gone that morning to London. If any thing in the piece should appear unkind, believe me, sir, it has slid in unawares. I had, I still have, the highest opinion of the learning, candour and virtue of Mr. Jebb; and I am sure he understands the nature of religious liberty, and the rights of conscience so perfectly, that he expects no apology for a candid opposition to his sentiments. You will allow me to say, what many would startle at, it is not impossible, that our sentiments, much as they seem to differ, may after all differ less than they appear

appear to do. I look forward to that day when in a better world we shall see eye to eye: and with the most profound veneration, I remain,

Reverend Sir,

Yours most respectfully,

R. ROBINSON.

DEAR SIR, *Cambridge, Feb. 7. 1776.*

I Return you my hearty acknowledgements for your pamphlet, and the friendly letter with which it was accompanied. Although I must confess, that my opinion regarding the main point of doctrine, which is the subject of our consideration, remains the same, I yet can say with truth, that I read your essay with pleasure, and received, in many particulars, information and improvement from the perusal. Your truly christian temper in the discussion of so interesting a question, together with your generous sentiments respecting religious liberty, I cannot sufficiently admire,—and I thank you very sincerely for the obliging manner in which you speak of myself. I am, with great esteem and every good wish,

Affectionately Yours,

JOHN JEBB.

Before this chapter closes, justice requires the following observation. The Plea for the divinity of Christ Robinson always professed to

be rather a Sabellian, than a Trinitarian book, that its object was not to defend the strictly orthodox side of the question.—This year, in May, Robinson published the Circular Letter of the Easter Association, which has been much admired in the baptist-churches.

During this period, the dispute concerning the American war engaged our author's most serious attention: and, to speak ingenuously, he was better prepared to write on that subject, than on a point of controversial divinity: for, it should be repeated, he was apt to indulge his fancy, and he possessed a most luxuriant one, and even his jocularity, which was uncommon, where his judgement was not precise, or his opinion, as to the importance of a subject, was no wise strong; his favourite sentiment being, whether right or wrong, let others determine, "that the belief of such theories is unconnected with the happiness of society, or the future expectations of mankind."

"Well, brother," I have sometimes heard him say, at the close of a long debate on controversial theology, "I must now begin to consider the price of wheat, (for he was at the time I allude to a farmer) and leave those who have more leisure, and wiser heads, to fathom profound

found doctrines." Nay; I have heard him say to some of his poor brother ministers, jokingly (for it must be confessed that he was accustomed to carry his jokes even into religious disputes) "Brother, I have delivered my present sentiments ; but I am going to feed the swans at the bottom of my garden : on my return, I perhaps shall think differently."

In politics he felt an ardour that bordered upon enthusiasm : with subjects connected with government few men of his time were more conversant, none possessed more variety, or greater originality of ideas.

With the events, that passed from the period at which Great Britain first formed the determination of framing laws for America, till that when the United States of America rendered themselves independent, he had a most accurate acquaintance.

Of the American constitution he was a zealous admirer. Of general Washington he always expressed himself in terms of the highest respect, and frequently diverted himself, by comparing the endeared character and respectable station of that great man to the artificial distinctions and haughty claims of European despots :

despots: he could, at least, go as far as Charles Fox, who has thus expressed himself: "That, compared with Washington, all the sovereigns of Europe, our own excepted, were paltry and contemptible." He never maintained a regular correspondence in America; as he confessed to Thomas Mullet, a respectable American merchant, now in London: but a few years after this period, his great worth and eminent talents were well known to the leading men in that country; very handsome proposals were made him, to settle in the United States: and in the joy experienced by the Americans, on having established their independence, he most cordially participated.

From the year 1775, there are numerous assortments of his letters, for his correspondents became numerous: though a great variety have most probably been either lost, or returned to the original writers. Among his correspondents this year, are, Dr. Majendie, whose father had been pupil to Saurin, when at the Hague; Thomas Holloway, an ingenious artist, who made the engravings of Saurin, and of Robinson; Dr. Gifford; William Whitchurch; William Curtis, late a worthy dissenting minister at Linton, Cambridgeshire; Joshua Toulmin (now Dr.), author of the *Life of Socinus*, and various

ous other publications, theological and political ; Daniel Turner, M. A. author of Meditations on various Passages in the Scripture, Essays on Important Subjects, &c.

CHAPTER IX.

Various Incidents of his Life in 1777.

AMONG the most favourable occurrences in the life of Robinson during the year 1777, may be reckoned his acquaintance, that commenced at this period, with two excellent women, Ann and Sufannah Calwell; of whom it will be small praise to say, they were persons possessed of a very ample fortune. They had the penetration to discover, and the disposition to patronise, distinguished abilities. To their friendship Robinson was highly indebted: through their liberality, encouraging him in his literary pursuits, he enjoyed a degree of learned ease, that he had never yet experienced, and a part of that property, which he afterwards possessed.

The above excellent women came this year to reside at Trumpington, a village two miles from Cambridge, on the London road, in a house, the property of Christopher Anstey, the author of the New Bath Guide.

This year, also, I consider as a fortunate æra in my own history: from the latter end of it, my acquaintance with Robinson began to strengthen;

strengthen; his preaching I had been accustomed to attend before. Henceforth, therefore, the reader must not be surprised to meet with a frequent repetition of the personal pronoun, *I*. The language of egotism cannot well be avoided; where the biographer speaks from his own knowledge, and aims to touch the features of an original character from more immediate observation.

A pleasing recollection of former friendships, also, inclines me to notice, that I introduced to his acquaintance some young men of the university, more particularly Bryan Bury Collins, of St. John's college, a person of great worth, and an elegant poet: he afterwards became a popular preacher.

The situation of Robinson's generous friends at Trumpington became in the end peculiarly favourable to his theological pursuits: he being engaged in preparing a work for the public, which required a larger collection of books, than his own library afforded. The work alluded to, was, *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, translated from the French of John Claude. Of the performance itself a more complete account shall hereafter be given. The only circumstance, belonging to the present chapter, shall be given in Robinson's own words. "I had the misfortune, by a fall from a coach,

coach, to sprain my ankle. This laid me long aside from my public labours, and deprived me of what, above all things in the world, I loved, frequent preaching lectures in the villages, where members of my congregation lived. I endeavoured to console myself, and assist my brethren, by revising, enlarging and publishing this essay. To, this several gentlemen advised me, and at the same time Christopher Ansley, esquire, of Bath, generously offered me the use of the large library of his good father, the late Dr. Ansley, and my good friends Mrs. and Miss Calwell, both generous benefactors to our education-society at Bristol, where pious young men, recommended by our churches, are prepared for the ministry, liberally furnished me with every accommodation, hoping, as the excellent tutors of that society have been pleased to think, that the Essay might be of great advantage also to their pupils."

Of the abovementioned institution it may be proper to observe, that it was first set on foot in the year 1770. The proper founder was Dr. Evans, son of Hugh Evans, M. A. the late highly respected pastor of the baptist meeting-house, in Broadmead, Bristol, who died 1781. The original managers of it were Hugh Evans, M. A. president: Caleb Evans, M. A. who in 1789 received diplomas of D.D. both from Aber-

deen, and Rhode Island, where the baptists have a college; and James Newton, M. A. tutors: alderman Bull, treasurer; and Thomas Mullett, secretary. The original library has been encreased by a valuable legacy, bequeathed to it by the late Thomas Llewellyn, LL. D. consisting of a library, which cost more than 1500l. and by another, bequeathed by Andrew Gifford, D. D. late of the Museum. This legacy consisted of a library, pictures, and coins, valued at 1000l. The present value of the library, philosophical apparatus, coins, &c. may be estimated at 4000l. This circumstantial account has been made, as connected with the practice of Robinson, who made it an invariable rule to oppose a vulgar notion, that the baptists discard literature.

The present president is John Ryland, a sensible divine of the Calvinistic persuasion. He was elected in 1791, and has since received from Rhode Island the diploma of D. D. He is the son of the late John Ryland, M. A. of Northampton, a man of considerable reading, and an original genius.

In several letters from friends this year to Robinson, are expressions of condolence on account of his indisposition, and of advice to be less eager and restless in his literary pursuits.

But

But to such advice he rarely felt himself at sufficient leisure to attend ; and to his imprudent indefatigable zeal, he, at length, fell a victim. From a well-organised system, unimpaired by youthful debaucheries, unmanly effeminacies, or wasting intemperance, he might have enjoyed all the vigour of health, and all the hilarity of spirits. Of this he was too confident: he seemed to think nothing could shake his nerves ; and used frequently to say with a jest, that "he had but one weak nerve: this came from his breeches pocket:" but while laughing at people with weak nerves, which was his invariable practice, he was insensibly sapping his own vitals.

His characteristic feature was love of liberty. The tendency of his numerous writings goes rather to demolish systems of tyranny, than to erect the tyranny of opinion ; to emancipate the human understanding ; to prepare it for fair investigation ; to enable it to preserve, as it were, a natural tone, a personal vigour ; not to bend it by compulsory rules ; to vassalise it by mean observances ; or to inclose it by fantastic theories. Hence his opposition to religious establishments.

All Robinson's writings proceed on the dissenters' principles: but though full of hostile designs

designs on the church, they assumed not the air of a direct attack. His friendships could not win him over to be a churchman; but they softened the rigour of the dissenter.

His acquaintance was now courted by some of the more independent part of the dissenting body: they addressed him as a man whose powers were formidable, and whose polemic adroitness had been repeatedly acknowledged by the episcopal party. He, therefore, collected new strength, and assumed a firmer tone: the anti-hierarchical principles, which he had hitherto arranged only in private, or thinly scattered in publications, he now began to form into a regular and well-disciplined body, intending to make a formal and unevasive assault.

“ The History and Mystery of Good Friday,” which he published this year, contains a spirited and judicious attack on those religious establishments, which impose the observance of festival days and superstitious practices. This work, though small, possesses great merit: it contains only fifty-six pages; but displays throughout great humour and no small learning; it has been reprinted several times, and obtained a very extensive circulation: it is one of those interesting publications, which, to use an ex-
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pression of Robinson's, " by addressing the pockets of the common people, easily gains admittance to their understandings."

This smart bagatelle procured him many enemies among the clergy, and, at the same time, strange as it may seem, made many, even of the clergy, his great admirers. His friend John Thompson observes to him in a letter as follows, concerning this pamphlet: " The History and Mystery of Good Friday pleaseth us much. A worthy episcopal divine writes to me, our clergy are angry, but it is an incomparable piece."

This pamphlet, together with the preface to the third volume of Saurin's Sermons, occasioned Tucker, dean of Gloucester, who had before paid him many handsome compliments through Sir James Stonehouse for his Plea, to propose several queries to our author, through the medium of his friend Thompson. The title to these pages is as follows: " Queries relating to Religious Liberty and Church Establishments, submitted to the Candor of Robert Robinson, the learned and ingenious Translator of Saurin's Sermons." Robinson and his friends were pleased with the candor of the dean, but thought him a superficial investigator of these matters: and as the queries

queries were circulated only in a private and anonymous manner, Robinson, Thompson, and Dr. Furneaux, gave a private answer.

The only original work that Robinson published this year was the above bagatelle. He, however, communicated to Dr. Kippis, in consequence of a letter from him, several particulars concerning Baker, an eminent and learned antiquary, late fellow of St. John's college, Cambridge. These relate to his manuscripts, which are very numerous and valuable, and several anecdotes concerning the author. The materials were procured from the public library of Cambridge. These communications were sent to Dr. Kippis, and may be seen in the *Biographia Britannica*, under the article Baker.

Among his correspondents this year, were Jonathan Mather, a man of considerable fortune, and a great admirer of Robinson; Cappel Lofft, an ingenious and learned man, well-known from his various publications in law, politics, criticism, theology, and poetry; Dr. Randall, professor of music at Cambridge; Sir James Stonehouse, late a physician at Bristol; Dr. Evans, late of Bristol; William Hey of Leeds, author of the *Treatise on the Divinity of Christ*, alluded to above; J. Robotham, for some years

a presbyterian minister at Cambridge ; Dr. Kippis, editor of the Biographia Britannica ; John Thompson, a dissenting minister ; R. Beadon, public orator at Cambridge, now bishop of Gloucester ; J. Lucas, Bury St. Edmunds.

CHAPTER X.

A general Review of Robinson's Character.

THIS chapter is devoted to a few remarks on his private, domestic, ministerial, and literary character. The great man is conspicuous elsewhere; the amiable man is contemplated at home.

The dictates of nature are much the same in all undepraved hearts, though genius is wont to feel differently from common minds, and to display a kind of original appearance in the most common actions.

Robinson was accustomed to practise family worship; but his addresses were neither violent or declamatory on the one hand, nor long and circuitous on the other. The former he would have thought an insult to the Being he addressed; the latter to the family. His tone was soft, his sentiments manly, his language tender and domestic. He usually read a portion out of the christian scriptures, but never expounded them in his family.

Of filial affection he was a model. It is saying little, to observe, that he supported his mother

ther to a very advanced age: this he thought his highest honour. Nothing afforded him so much pleasure as to administer to her consolation in affliction, and to smoothe the path of her declining years. He knew how prone old people are to dwell with delight on former transactions. Robinson met this natural inclination, by frequently conversing with his parent on subjects, that engaged her early life; and the sight of an old friend, as it administered to his mother's gratification, was a cordial to his own bosom.

In his conjugal relation, he was attentive and affectionate: and insinuations to the contrary have proceeded from mistakes, or were raised by insidious and designing men: by transient visitors his pleasantries may, sometimes, have been misinterpreted into severities; but the ruder passions were strangers to his heart. He might, indeed, to some, appear to keep too far aloof from the endearments of domestic life: and it is true, that various pursuits might, frequently, divide his attentions, and literary labours occasionally absorb his regards. But his breast could not be the seat of indifference: no man was more capable of fixing the female heart by manly affability, and by unaffected sweetness.

No parent ever possessed greater affection, or was more inclined to indulgence.

His opinions concerning the education of children, were thought by many persons rather eccentric. The enthusiasm of his genius made him appear romantic. Yet, what is genius, but a power of seeing further than common minds, and of removing difficulties with greater ease? Attentive to young people, and fond even to weakness of children, particularly of his own, he supposed, that the latent fires of genius begin to kindle very soon; and he was studious, by gentle measures, to fan them to a steady flame. The innocent delights of children he by every means encouraged: nothing more disgusted him than the custom of over-awing their understandings, by injunctions and restraints. "What is this" he would say, "but to be a despot of a family, to bind nature hand and foot?" He rather invited enquiry, than imposed tasks: he thought a tyrant over children was generally a person of the weakest intellect.

His opinion was, that young people recollect longer, what they discover by their own sagacity and observation, than in the way of formal lessons. Great part of his house was stuck over with pictures, of inconsiderable value, as

to price, but rich with principles of instruction. "Children," he used to say, "catch the most useful hints in their most unguarded moments." It is not asserted that he possessed no weakness, that he was guilty of no indiscretions; but if he was sometimes weak, he was more frequently great. He knew himself to be a superior man, and was always disgusted at weak people, who obtruded on him directions how to govern his family.

He was thought by some to be too familiar with servants: and it was frequently his fortune to receive into his house persons, who could get little employment elsewhere: he was influenced as much by compassion, as by considerations of private utility: indeed he possessed the art of governing tempers, thought by others unmanageable; and of bearing with weaknesses, which would throw many into convulsions. The truth is, the art of governing consists in a man's knowing how to govern himself: with him it was a constant maxim, "that nothing so much humanises the heart, as bearing with the infirmities of others."

Two examples may serve to illustrate this view of Robinson's character. There was a person known by the name of poor John of Norwich, (alias John Carlton), who was a kind
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of idiot, or, at least, passed for one, who had been acquainted with Robinson when a boy at Norwich. He had been *called*, that is, had become religious, under Robinson's ministry when a preacher in that city; and he could not be satisfied, till he became a strolling preacher. Whether the man was so sincere as Robinson apprehended, will not be enquired: Robinson, at least, thought him an honest man, though possessed of the understanding of an infant. He even encouraged him to preach, and actually signed a paper as a kind of testimonial, by virtue of which, poor John strolled about the country, and lisped nonsense, for he could not speak a word plainly: he frequently preached in Robinson's family: how many sinners he converted, or how many saints he comforted, is of little consequence. Robinson, at least, did not entirely lose his end; he endured this man's occasional visits, and was the means of procuring him support.

The other example is that of a needy though sincere old woman, whom he for a considerable time supported in his family. The poor creature had scarcely common sense, but was without the least guile. Robinson used to hear all her religious tales: and whenever she was in a state of *soul-desertion*, Robinson was at leisure to drop some gracious gospel-promise into her ear: when she
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was in a state of religious exaltation, Robinson partook of all her triumphs.—She was deaf.

It being, however, the misfortune of Robinson, to meet with bad people, who abused his kindness, he knew how to express his indignation; for, indeed, the same tenderness of disposition that renders man susceptible of benevolence, makes him equally sensible of an insult. Hence it was, that he could bear with the natural imperfections, the undesigning follies, and indiscretions of men: yet to unmerited slander, and studied malevolence, he bore strong resentment.

The moralist, who addresses a depraved heart, is like a philosopher making an hazardous experiment: not only may his exertions prove fruitless: he may receive positive detriment. The philanthropist, also, while healing the wounds of others, may catch a disease that cannot easily be cured: he may fall, like the physician, while raising another—and fall perhaps by his patient's hand. If the numbers recovered by Robinson from profligacy, or assisted in distress, were counted over, how great would his character appear; his instructions, his liberalities, were not confined to parties. When his countenance glowed, it was the language of the soul, that could not have been expressed
so

so well by sounds : but he could also shew greater contempt of a vicious character, by a well-directed frown, or hint, than could have been conveyed by the most forcible language, or the bitterest reproaches.

An instance occurs to me, when Robinson expressed his feelings on such an occasion. A poor dissenting minister, of an indifferent character, had been frequently entertained at his house. Robinson had given him clothes, food, and money, introduced him to his Cambridge friends, and permitted him to preach in his pulpit. He was a very orthodox man, "ready to burst with orthodoxy," as Robinson used to express it: but approving, at least, practically, the sentiment, "that gratitude is no virtue," he turned out a secret enemy to his benefactor: misrepresenting his character, spreading alarms about his religious sentiments, and even preaching against him in his own pulpit. Robinson, at length, became acquainted with his slander, and understood all his insidious intentions. He interrupted not the harmony of his visit, nor diminished the number of his enjoyments; but rather, during his continuance in the neighbourhood, heaped on him more civilities, preserving towards him, in his conversation, all the mildness of a child, and all the frankness of a brother minister. But when, about

to

to depart, the man advanced to take his leave of Robinson, then was the time for him to suffer correction, and he received the most severe and poignant rebukes: the more severe, because administered with apparent gentleness; the more poignant, because he was addressed as a religious man.

An instance of a more singular kind will occur to some of his friends. Robinson had conceived himself most injuriously treated by a person, whom he had supposed his friend: he lived to obtain evidence, that the party suspected was not the man, who committed the injury. So strong and violent a dislike, however, had been conceived by Robinson, that of this person, he is said never afterwards to have entertained a good opinion, nor to have lived with him on terms of friendship: Robinson, perhaps, might possess sufficient proof, that the general turn of his character was insincere.

His sensibility in receiving a civility was equal to his delicacy in conferring one. In the early part of his life, when he was very poor, a person thought he had conferred an extraordinary favour on him, by obtruding on his acceptance an old suit of black clothes. Robinson was one day dining at his table. "Mr. Robinson," said the donor, "I never saw you
look

look so much like a gentleman." "Sir," replied Robinson, "I cannot afford to look like a gentleman:" then taking the butter-boat, he emptied it on the clothes, and immediately going out, he stripped himself, and putting on his own clothes, he took his leave.

Another example will shew the value put by Robinson on such loquacious liberalities. Though in the act of conferring numerous favours on others, he was in circumstances that required assistance. He became acquainted with a person of considerable fortune. One day, in a mixed company, this man was discoursing with him about his large family, and presented him, at the same time, with a purse, collected, perhaps, from different persons. This was accepted; but holding up the purse in his hand, and casting an arch look at the donor, Robinson addressed him in such terms as shewed, he put no great value on the present.

It may be asked, did not Robinson, in these instances, discover pride? Perhaps so. But might not the others discover more? Robinson used to confess, that "on certain occasions he was as proud as a Spaniard."

A wise man estimates a present, not according to its intrinsic weight, or immediate utility,
but

but to the disposition, with which it was given. An obligation should receive a proportionate acknowledgement: but to over-rate it, may injure him who confers it: and from the person, who receives it, very unreasonable returns may be expected. Does a man, in rendering you assistance, remind you of your poverty? You are insulted. Does he remind you of the greatness of his present bounty, and call the eyes of the world to gaze? He betrays his own vanity. He should be made to understand, that such, as offer incense to their own importance, lose the credit of benevolence, and may be injured by the expressions of gratitude.

Here follows an example of genuine humility. With Robinson, it was a maxim, "that if a child but lisped to give you pleasure, you ought to be pleased." Hence it was, that the smallest expression of kindness from villagers, though it were but lighting his pipe, was followed with tokens of his esteem. To a fastidious delicacy he was a total stranger. When occasionally preaching in barns, he used to be delighted in visiting his poor brethren: and, when solicited, would regale himself with their brown bread, and black tea; but took care, at the same time, that they should lose nothing by their attentions. I frequently attended him in these rural excursions, and
was

was always charmed with his converse. "When a poor person shews anxiety to administer to your comfort," he would say, "do not interrupt him: Why deprive him of the pleasure of expressing his friendship?" Among his papers is found a list of memoranda, or little commissions to be executed by him when in London: among several for his more wealthy friends, are found such as follows: B—'s Petitions. Gown for poor M—. M. M.'s son to be seen. H. wishes Mr. H. to be merciful.—W. thinks his son's wages are too small.—Watt's Hymns for T. H.—Testament for C.

The following note also, written to Dr. —, in 1772, shews that Robinson knew how to acknowledge a civility, when bestowed in a gracious manner.

"The favour you was pleased to bestow by the hands of Mr. —, on the receiver's part wholly unsolicited, on the donor's so handsomely conferred, demands gratitude and thanks: accept them, reverend sir, and suffer it to be added, that if the gift affords some pleasure, the benevolence which confers it, affords much more. Heaven hasten the time when Christians shall learn religious war no more! when magistrates shall cease to require, and Christian ministers to yield a subjection of conscience to penal laws.

If

If it was not too serious for satire, with much more reason might the oppressed complain, than Juvenal.

Sævas imponite leges.

Dicat

Nutricem Anchisæ; nomen patriamque novercæ

Archemori: dicat quot Acestes vixerit annos, &c.

The church of Rome, however blameable, is yet consistent in confining her favours to her own community; for she confines heaven too to the same church; circumscribing infinite goodness within the narrow limits of a party. But when protestants turn partizans, who is so blind as not to see the incongruity of such a conduct?—Your generosity, sir, to one, who, it is supposed, receives a creed different from your own, forces this.”

As a student, Robinson possessed some singularities: that he was uncommonly industrious, no one will deny: never was there a person, over whose study door might be put with greater propriety, “Idle hours, not idly spent*.” He was always employed: what many people gain in a way of solemn study, came to him in a way of recreation; reading, writing, giving

* Sir Henry Wotton’s motto over his study door. See his Remains.

advice,

advice, employments in the fields, or in the farm-yard, (I allude to the time when he was a farmer) totally occupied him when at home.—The letters that he received and wrote, were incredible. Yet he could be as gay as any man: for no one was less of a pedant: he would frequently reprove a serious coxcomb, who, without learning, without talents, and without industry, made great pretences to application, saying, “God help me and my children! we have not so much time for study as you gentlemen of literature.” No man more excelled in this way of raillery. If he saw a young fellow vain with the pride of literature, when, perhaps, extremely ignorant, he would address him with excessive flattery; and when on the point of bursting with self-admiration, he would attack him with all the poignancy of raillery. Indeed, so much did he excel in this art of varying his address, that you might suppose yourself conversing at different times with Chesterfield, La Bruyere, Theophrastus, and Rabelais. “This,” he would say, “is the proper way of teaching a conceited young fellow the knowledge of himself.” For the advice of men of literature, he was always thankful, but was too proud to listen to dictators. He possessed what is called modesty, properly defined; but he knew himself to possess superior talents.

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He had read much, had thought much, had digested much. His favourite studies were languages, metaphysics, morals, politics, law, and history. With the science of mathematics he had no acquaintance. He possessed a relish for the beauties of the Greek and Latin classic writers, and had read many of them. In the French language he was well versed. The French writers he approved; but Voltaire and Rousseau he admired. His knowledge of the Hebrew was not critical or extensive. In order to procure original information for two learned histories hereafter to be remarked on, he in the latter part of his life studied Italian, German, Spanish, and Dutch. His way of acquiring a knowledge of these languages, was to sit down to an author without any previous knowledge of the grammar, and to refer only to the grammar, as to his dictionary. Religion was his profession, and he had in the early part of life read much of theological controversy. He had an accurate acquaintance with the histories of the Old and New Testament: but as a verbal critic, his knowledge was not exact, nor his judgement profound.

As a companion, Robinson possessed a great fund of entertainment and instruction: with the serious he could be as serious as any man, and he could descend to the greatest jocularity. Apt
rather

rather to enquire than dispute, to concede an argument, rather than insult an adversary, the theologian intruded not on the province of the friend.

His wit was ready; his ridicule, on proper occasions, pointed and fatirical; and his power of holding people in laughter uncommon. Some, indeed, thought he was farcical on subjects that required seriousness; but to people very solemn, yet stupid and conceited, he would allow himself to say, "Brother, explain the matter; when I comprehend the subject, I'll preach about it." Towards every truly good and honest man, however simple, he could shew the greatest indulgence: but coxcombs, particularly when in black, were the abhorrence of his soul.

On one point, he was rather decisive. Priesthood, in his estimation, was the grand adversary, or, to use his own language, "the great black devil," whom all good *non-cons* should oppose. Had he known how, he would have destroyed this enemy: yet with priests, he could live in agreeable intimacy, and interchange ideas. Blest with a talent for sprightly conversation, and possessed of much general knowledge, he was courted by wise men, and his condescension rendered him accessible to the

weakest. Called, in the discharge of his duty, to intimacy with persons of various occupations, he acquired a peculiar art in turning their visits to account, so that different mechanics, when discoursing with him on their particular callings, enquired, " Whence did this man derive his knowledge?" In the constitution of his mind, and the general turn of his manners, he was a mixture of Rousseau and Socrates: his admirers pronounced him a disciple of Jesus; yet some thought he took a few lessons from Chesterfield: to an uncommon degree, he could pay adulation and could endure it: before knaves he was reserved; but he could flatter fools.

As a teacher of religion, he was an unique: his voice was uncommonly harmonious; and his eyes were in constant motion; he used to study the countenances, and the circumstances of his audience. His best sermons rose out of the occasion, and his images were drawn from familiar objects. This mode of address has been particularly noticed by Sir Isaac Newton, and others, as agreeable to the practice of the east, and the conduct of Jesus. Hence there appeared great animation in his discourses, and an ease, remote from the pedantry of preaching, and a display of knowledge. The clerical appearance, and even the ministerial character, he by no means approved; on the contrary, he
made

made them the subject of his frequent raillery, as well in private circles, as in the pulpit. His wish was, to lead people to think, and to act, for themselves: at the same time, no man possessed greater power over a congregation. In many respects, therefore, he was somewhat accommodating; and without affecting to govern, his sway over his audience was irresistible. He appeared no where to more advantage, than among the poorest of his flock. Each Sunday he devoted the intervals betwixt morning and evening service, to friendly intercourse; and being fond of a pipe, though he was never a drinker, he used to get his poor people round him at an old widow woman's house, near the meeting: here he gratified himself in hearing their distresses, in answering their difficulties, and, to the best of his power, in relieving their wants.

He would, indeed, sometimes mix in his addresses too many shining thoughts, and glittering expressions, through his imitation of Saurin: but this was contrary to his better judgement and more sober conviction: he was, in general, the simplest of all speakers. He invariably preached extempore, and, of course, was not always to be depended on: his manner had too much the air of mere conversation, to captivate the admiration of transient hearers; and

some of the most elegant lectures that I ever heard him deliver, have been given to him by friends, from passages of scripture, just before he ascended the pulpit.

Ars est celare artem, was exemplified in Robinson as a public speaker. From nature he had received much; he was also much indebted to art, and had formed himself by the best models. The qualifications of an orator are by no writer laid down with greater accuracy, than by the Roman orator; and it would be difficult to exemplify them better than in the person of Robinson.

“In an orator,” says Tully, “there should be invention, arrangement, elocution, memory, and pronunciation. Invention is the devising of facts, that are true, or that resemble truth, so as to give a cause the air of probability; arrangement is the order, and proper distribution of those facts, assigning to each its proper place; elocution is the adapting of proper words, and sentences, to the facts; memory is the mind’s ready perception of facts, of words, and of method; pronunciation consists in a graceful regulation of the countenance, voice, and gesture*.”—The last qualification no person possessed in a higher degree, than Robinson: his

* Rhetoricorum lib. i.

voice, as before observed, was uncommonly musical, and he possessed great skill in adapting it to the different passions that moved him, and the countenances of his hearers; but amidst all its varieties you heard the same voice; he was different from those declaimers, who, while they attempt to accommodate their voices to different subjects, resemble a man playing on different instruments: he was never boisterous, rarely feeble, and seldom whining.

To these general qualifications of an orator,—and a natural orator he certainly was of the first rank,—he superadded professional peculiarities. His character, in this respect, has been well delineated by the worthy and learned president of New College, Hackney:

“ What your preacher was, you well know. How instructive and interesting in the matter of his discourses, and in the manner of his delivering them, you well remember, and cannot well forget. There was always a variety, and often an originality, both in what he said, and in his mode of saying it. It was his constant aim to lead the attention of his hearers to the weightier matters of the law, to inform the judgement before he attempted to interest the passions: and, after inculcating just notions of

truth and duty, to enforce a corresponding practice. There have been few preachers, if any, who have done so much, both in this neighbourhood and in London, to rescue the human mind from bondage; to correct prevailing errors, to promote a liberal spirit of enquiry, to recommend mutual forbearance and candor among Christians of different opinions; to weaken their attachment to creeds and forms of human device and imposition; and to direct their chief attention to the principles and duties of piety, virtue, and universal charity. He had a manner of supplanting rooted prejudices, without occasioning alarm; of sapping, if I may be allowed the expression, instead of storming, the fortifications of error; of gaining assent to general principles, inconsistent with the opinions which he wished to expose; and of leading men to think, judge, and determine for themselves, and to pursue those principles to their consequences: in which he wonderfully excelled, and which produced, in many instances, the best effects. In his judgement, I have reason to believe, nothing was fundamental, nothing was essential to men's interest in the favour of God, and the everlasting benefits of the gospel,—but an honest heart and a holy life. By contributing to diffuse the prevalence of this principle, he promoted union, and fellowship, and mutual affection among
Christians

Christians of very different sentiments and denominations."

But we shall dwell no longer on the character of Robinson, as a preacher or teacher. His own ideas of what a public instructor should be may be collected from his translation of Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon. — This appeared the proper place to attempt a delineation of Robinson's character, as about this period I became more intimately acquainted with him.

CHAPTER XI.

An Account of two Publications of Robinson's, entitled the History and Mystery of Good Friday, and a Syllabus of Lectures on Nonconformity.

BY his publication, entitled the History and Mystery of Good Friday, it appeared to many of Robinson's clerical friends at this time, that their complaisance and civil intentions received an ungrateful return. But Robinson knew, that all hierarchical systems countenance oppression; and that the complaisance of a church dignitary, soliciting a man of talents to conformity, may proceed from a principle widely different from genuine benevolence. The reputation of gaining a considerable profelyte, or of disarming a formidable opponent, is frequently the cause of exertions apparently generous. Determined, therefore, to break all measures, he formed a design of confirming young dissenters in their separation from the established church. He laboured diligently to promote lectures on the principles of nonconformity, and, accordingly, published, in the year 1778, *A Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity, for the Instruction of Catechumens.*

The

The merit of this work is uncommon, and it contains the outlines of the whole controversy of the dissenters with the church of England, and of their history from the period of the reformation, to the year 1778. Each chapter contains short heads, which were to be filled up by the lecturer. How much admired by his brethren this performance was, may be seen by the letter of their "Eastern Association."

EASTERN ASSOCIATION.

Harlow, Essex, June 18, 1778.

This Syllabus, entitled "a Plan of Lectures on Nonconformity," drawn up by our brother Robinson, has been read and approved of by us at this association, and we hereby commend it to our sister churches.

Signed, by order of all, by

MORGAN JONES, MODERATOR.

The dissenters' bill had just then been depending in parliament, and the debate in both houses was warm. Of this Syllabus the most honourable mention was made in the House of Lords, by Lord Shelburne: and in the House of Commons, Burke, by selecting some detached passages, grounded on them an illiberal attack on the dissenters, which was well repelled by Charles Fox.

These

These incidents inclined our author to publish it, and it soon went through five editions; and several pamphlets were published against it under the signatures, Candidus, and Veritas, Niger, and Mendax.

The remarks that were most worthy of reply were written by Mr. Burgess, prebendary of Winchester; who animadverted on it in a Course of Letters, addressed to the bishop of London. Robinson intended to have made a formal reply, but dropt his design, perceiving that Burgess mistook the nature of the controversy. In the preface to the fifth edition he observes as follows, "The reverend prebendary of Winchester, who thought fit to animadvert on this book, in a series of letters, addressed to his lord bishop of London, acknowledges the want of some revision, and reformation; and in this he speaks the language of all considerate members of his community: but the subjects to be revised are the Articles, and the Liturgy, not the point, the great point, religious liberty, on which all the controversy turns. We object against a constitution; and we are answered by encomium, on the officers who administer it: a dignified clergyman could not say less, and a prudent bishop would not wish for more."

This

This singular work forms a plan for the most systematic attack ever made on the church of England; and that must be the apology for dwelling so long on it: we lay the following specimen of its character, which contains the heads of the third lecture.

A General View of Queen Elizabeth's Church.

INTRODUCTION.

Revealed religion always gloried in a public exposure.—Moses published his mission in the most learned—and inquisitive—court then in the world.—The prophets did not preach in dark places of the earth,—they reproached dark pagan priests for peeping and muttering in obscurity.—Jesus Christ taught no secrets.—He commanded the apostles to publish his Gospel on the house-tops, and they obeyed him strictly.—Truth gains by exposure—and if silent acquiescence were essential to prelatical safety, it would be a violent prejudice against it.—One knows not what to make of the inconsistency of this church—it publishes laws, books, &c. and seems to challenge examination,—and yet it publishes other laws, and other books to prohibit examination. We shall go by the former, and place it in several points of light to obtain a just notion of it.

VIEW

VIEW I.

The system acquires no reputation from the times in which it was formed—nor from the persons who formed it.—Neither Harry nor Elizabeth had any piety nor one sound notion of civil government.—They were only necessary to the reformation, as they were less tyrants than the pope.—Statesmen sacrificed religion to save the nation.—Prelates were chosen for secular purposes—and all persons—and events—were directed to crown uses.—There was very little learning—less deliberate moderation—and no philosophy in any of them.

VIEW II.

Prelatical hierarchy is not religion.—It is no part of moral philosophy, which is natural religion—nor of the plan of redemption, which is revealed religion—it is a direct violation of both.—People in the community may think themselves religious—as the deformed think themselves handsome,—or they may be religious—as trees may be fruitful in an unfriendly soil,—but the constitution itself is not religion—nor calculated to promote it—Nor faith—Nor repentance, &c.

VIEW III.

The hierarchy, considered as a corporation, is
uncon-

unconstitutional—Its creeds—and canons—and rules of government—are a kind of bye-laws—which are unconstitutional when they violate the first allowed principles of government.—Charters,—patents,—and monopolies—flowing from regal prerogative—are so far illegal—as they injure society at large.

VIEW IV.

Prelacy, as a system of governing, is unsound at heart.—In all good governments, the people are the origin of power—but the people have no authority here.—The parliament that authenticated the hierarchical system exceeded their powers.—The people could not commit—nor did they commit the choice of a religion to them: and had they elected them for that purpose, they could not constitutionally bind their successors—and they might as well have stated our taxes to the end of the world—as our religion.—Prelacy has always thriven most under arbitrary princes—and discovered one uniform invariable attachment to dominion over conscience.

VIEW V.

An established hierarchy is baneful to learning—especially sound critical religious literature.—A given sense of scripture—imposed by oath on juniors—precludes free inquiry, the

foul of learning—and poisons education at the spring head.—Accordingly the scriptures sink into disrepute.—Divinity is no science at universities—Classics and mathematics are all in all—there is nothing to find out in religion.—Thirty-nine articles tell all.—There is nothing to improve—for, to swear not to endeavour to alter, is to give up the idea of improvement.—There is nothing to defend: the sword does that—no use of reason—argument—persuasion,—for the people were all made Christians at baptism.

VIEW VI.

The episcopal establishment may be viewed as falling in, or rather out, with the generous plan of redemption to be communicated by preaching. The plan was laid to make all men see the manifold wisdom of God, by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ;—but this system drives some away from public worship—fatigues others with tedious, unmeaning ceremonies—leaves but a few minutes for preaching—employs them but seldom, and then devotes them to a rapid declamation—of a dry morality—a dream to amuse,—or a drug to stupefy.

VIEW VII.

Consider episcopacy as it affects property,
—calculate

—calculate the charge of introducing, supporting, adorning, employing it. It is an enormous tax imposed on industry, to empower a few individuals to sign a few useless papers,—to loll in indolence,—to riot in luxury,—and to defeat, among lords, what liberal acts for religious liberty are supported by commons.

VIEW VIII.

Prelacy hurts morality :—morality is either supported by personal principles,—but this system is formed for the destruction of principles,—or by imitation of bright examples ;—but alas ! how few such have we heard of !—and how are prevarication, hypocrisy, formality, bigotry, &c. propagated by it !—Finish by placing prelates and people before the judge of the whole earth at the last day. Represent the glorious redeemer exhibiting his faithful servants,—whom prelacy ruined for claiming their natural and religious rights,—and saying to these holy tyrants, “ These had meat, drink, and habitations,—but ye reduced them to hunger, thirst, and banishment. I gave them cloathing, but ye stripped them naked.—They had health and liberty from me,—sickness and imprisonment from you :—depart.”

If Robinson treated the church of England with severity, let it be remembered, that he

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was

was in a post of observation, whence he could not but discover, both in the system of the establishment, and in the conduct of the clergy, what must excite both his ridicule, and his indignation. He was endued with a quick penetration and a refined sensibility. He had been accustomed to pore over the history of the nonconformists, and to read the long catalogues of their sufferings; and, though he was aware that men make systems, yet he also knew, that systems make men.

The respectful manner in which the Syllabus was mentioned by lord Shelburne in the upper house, and the spirited manner in which the bishops were addressed by him, obliged the clergy to consider its contents: several preached against it; and the bishop of Ely, particularly, being the spiritual father of the See, in which this arch-heretic lived, made some severe remarks on it, in his Visitation Sermon: but Robinson, having now broken all measures, conducted himself with a kind of conscious dignity. "What I have said," he observed, "is mercy to what I could have said."

Some things there certainly are censurable in this publication; the finishing part of the lecture quoted above has been thought more particularly so. On this being objected to him
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by a friend, he replied, "I venerate a good man, whether a bishop or a cobbler: a persecutor is neither a religious nor moral character; but a wicked man. I blame the bench, not as bishops, but as tyrants."

The following is a letter, from Thomas Curtis, a shrewd dissenting minister, which will explain this subject.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"LAST Monday was performed in the place denominated the church, in this town, a farce, called the Confirmation; I call it so, for so one of the principal performers stiled it,—one who ought to know what it was: the performer I allude to was no other than —— Ward, B. D. chaplain to the right reverend Edmund Keene lord bishop of Ely. Will you believe me, when I assure you, and in truth I do so, that so he stiled it to me, in the chancel of the said church, in the midst of the said performance, or rather, at the end of the first act? He knew to whom he said this; the occasion of which, &c. when I have the pleasure to see you, I shall explain."

At this visitation Robinson's works were mentioned in terms of particular respect, with

the exception, however, of the Syllabus. Handsome mention, likewise, was made by the bishop of the serious manner in which the dissenting ministers performed their devotions, and of the careless manner, in which they were performed by the established clergy. At dinner Curtis thanked the bishop in the presence of the clergy for the compliments paid the dissenters, and the bishop drank his health which was returned by Curtis."—Thus concluded the farce ! Robinson in short, had seen so much of the mummery of religion acted in the church ; had been as it were behind the curtain, with several learned and ingenious performers : and how natural for one of his cast to mix the " *ridiculum acri* !"

CHAPTER XII.

*An Account of Robinson's Translation of Claude's
Essay : a Hint to Dissenting Ministers.*

AT the close of the year 1788, our author published an Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, translated from the original French of the Rev. John Claude, with notes, in two vols. 8vo. To this work there has already been occasion to allude.

This divine stood at the head of the reformed party in France, at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantz, was a man of acknowledged abilities, of extensive literature, and of approved virtue. His theological system was that of the French Protestants of his time,—Calvinistic. Whether our readers be orthodox or heterodox, a short account of this eminent person may afford them amusement. A more compleat history of him may be read in Bayle, Mosheim, in the *Acta Eruditorum*, *Vie de Claude*, and other writers. Buddeus says of him, “Dubito an recentiori ætate aliquem majori omnes prosequuti sint veneratione, quam Joannem Claudium;” that is, “I doubt whether in the

present age, there is a single character, that all parties have so venerated, as John Claude."

The following short account written by Robinson, and prefixed to his translation of the essay, is submitted to the reader :

" It was in the year 1598, soon after the accession of Henry IV. that the reformed obtained, by an edict drawn up at Nantz, entire liberty of conscience, a free admission to all employments of trust, honour and profit, the use of churches, and universities, the liberty of holding synods, and whatever else was then thought necessary to the security of their civil and religious rights.

" While the churches enjoyed these privileges, the Rev. F. Claude, father of our author, was successively pastor of several reformed congregations in Lower Guienne, and was universally esteemed for the pious and honourable manner, in which he discharged his office. John was born at Sauvetat in 1618; his father, who was a lover of polite literature, took care of his education during his youth, and at a proper time sent him to Montauban to finish his studies. Having accomplished his course of philosophy, he applied himself to the study of divinity under professors Garrifoles and Charles.

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The fire of his imagination, the acuteness of his judgement, the sincere piety of his life, and particularly the modesty and affability of his manners, obtained him as many friends as tutors. In him, from his earliest years, were united the gravity of a divine, and the easy politeness of a courtier."

Claude was at first pastor of La Treyne, and, in succession, of St. Afrique in Rouergue, Nîmes, one of the most conspicuous churches in France, Montauban, and Charenton. After the revocation of the edict of Nantz, he retired to the Hague, where he was in great repute with the Prince of Orange; and here he published his Essay, for the use of his son, who was pastor of the Walloon church at the Hague. His controversy with the learned Bossuet on the subject of re-union with the Popish churches is well known, and the issue affords a demonstration, that liberty is alike estranged from Presbyterian, as well as from Popish and Episcopal church government. Robinson, however, maintains, that liberty is to be found in a fourth community; whether he is accurate, shall be left to the reader's determination. The following passage possesses a glowing animation of style; and great liberality of sentiment:

"Sacred religious liberty! Whither art thou
M 4 fled?

fled? Where shall I find thee? Methinks I hear thy plaintive voice in the wilderness! Lovely inhabitant of the desert! How beautiful are thy feet even on the rugged mountains! How enlivening thy voice! Lift it up with strength, and say unto the cities, Peace, Peace, behold your God!

“ Whether the fourth community, of which we now speak, came from the valleys of Piedmont, or whether it originated among those reformers, who, consistent with their own principles, made pure scripture the rule of reformation, it is certain some societies appeared, very early, advocates for congregational church government. The churches included both Baptists and Independents. Some, as the Brownists, ran liberty into licentiousness, and others, as Robinson in Holland, and Jacob in England, sometimes explained and arranged, and at other times rather cramped matters; but all held the principle of self-government, and the absolute independence of each congregation on any exterior jurisdiction. Here, as in all safe civil societies, the bases and principles of good government are held. Individuals are born free, each with liberty to dispose of himself. Several individuals congregated, carry together separate power, and deposit it in any degree, more or less, as the whole

whole think fit, in one aggregate sum, in one or more hands for the public good. Officers, chosen by all, to hold and dispense this delegated power, are in trust only—consequently, responsible to their constituents; and all their power is constitutionally revertible to the source, whence it came, on abuse of the trust, or at the demise of the trustee.

“ As all this business is spiritual, power extends only over spiritualities. Life, liberty, property, credit, and so on, are all insured in another office, entrusted in other hands, under the care of civil governors. Here then is religious liberty: various churches enjoy it in various degrees: but in those churches, where infants are excluded, and where all are volunteers,—where each society pleaseth itself and injures nobody,—where imposition is not known, and where blind submission cannot be borne,—where each society is a separate family, and all together a regular confederacy, unpaid for believing, and far from the fear of suffering,—there does religious liberty reign: we enjoy this liberty in England. It seems good to our civil governors to oblige us to purchase it by a renunciation of some of our civil birth-rights: we think this hard. However we pay the price, and enjoy the purchase.”

Of the liberty of many of the independent and baptist churches, no less than of the others, Robinson lived to entertain no very high opinion: for in his attempts to unite them, he found himself opposed by intolerant creeds. The truth is, liberty is rather the acquisition of individuals, than the inheritance of churches, or bodies of men:—but we have wandered.

Besides the present Essay, John Claude published a very learned work, entitled, “ A Defence of the Reformation:” this work shews, that the reformed in France took very confined views of religious liberty. Of this work, however, Robinson justly observes, “ That it is allowed by all to be a master-piece,—the best defence of our separation from Rome, that either he, or any other protestant minister, had ever published.”

The following critique on Robinson's translation of Claude's Essay, appears in the Monthly Review for August 1779.

“ The art of preaching, from the nature of the objects, on which it is employed, and the importance of the ends, which it is intended to answer, so well deserves, and, after all the varieties of forms, in which it has been practised in different ages, is so capable of further improve-

improvements, that every judicious attempt to place it on it's true foundation ; to deduce it's laws from rational principles ; to point out the defects which have attended, and still attend, the practice of it, and to render it of more general utility, merits the attention of the public. In the work here translated, the rational divine will meet with much good advice, which a judicious understanding, and improved taste, may apply to great advantage, on the composition and delivery of sermons.

“ This publication, however, derives it's principal value from the original notes, which the translator has subjoined, in which, after the manner of Bayle, he has introduced a great variety of remarks and quotations, which answer a better purpose, than that of elucidating the text ; affording the reader much valuable information, and agreeable entertainment. These notes are exceedingly miscellaneous, consisting of pertinent examples of the beauties or faults of preaching, from various writers, and these, many of them little known, curious and often humorous anecdotes, sensible reflections, and bold and free strokes of satire. From this miscellany, we could with pleasure select many amusing articles ; but we choose rather to fill up the space which we can allot this work, with a few extracts from the translator's introductory

ductory essays, from which it will appear that he writes with great boldness of language, and with all the zeal of a reformer."

The above circumstantial account of Claude's Essay, the reader must not interpret into an approbation of the system of doctrine interwoven in it, or as a declaration of its being a perfect model of pulpit eloquence. One who undertakes to deliver lectures from a particular book, should not desert that volume to run after partial systems; yet such is the method laid down by Claude.

The following letter, also, written by a sensible, though unlearned dissenting minister, possesses humour and good sense.

" I ought long ere now to have acknowledged with gratitude, so pleasing a testimony of your respect and friendship for me. The advertisement prefixed says, the Essay is published for the benefit of ministers, who have not had a regular academical education: the design of the notes is always to make the text understood; when one of these ministers comes to a rule of Mr. Claude's, which he does not fully comprehend, and follows the figure of reference to the bottom of the page, in hopes Mr. Robinson will explain it to him, that gentleman

tleman addresses him in language that he cannot understand.

“ I remember I once suggested to you the propriety of translating the Greek, Latin, and French notes. I now forget what were the reasons you gave for not doing it, except one which I never could forget; it was, that there would be enough in all reason for mere English readers. We are certainly under great obligations to you for what you have done: and if you say it is enough, we humbly submit, and acknowledge, it is more than we had a right to demand: but after all we cannot help thinking, that a suit of clothes, for which we have been accurately measured, and which was avowedly cut out and made up for us, ought to fit and fit easy upon us: but this with submission.” The name of this minister was Lombard; there is likewise a sensible letter on the same subject from Thomas Curtis, at that time a dissenting minister at Linton.

The following extract from the Dissertation, prefixed to the second volume, is left for the reader's meditation: the authority that makes the declaration, will not be disputed.

“ The history of the pulpit is curious and entertaining; it has spoken all languages, and
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in all sorts of style. It has partaken of all the customs of the schools, the theatres, and the courts of all countries where it has been erected. It has been a feat of wisdom, and a sink of nonsense. It has been filled by the best and the worst of men."

After giving his reasons for the preceding publication, Robinson observes as follows:

" With views of this kind (I speak in the fear of God), and not to give offence to any, I collected and published the notes in the following Essay. Alas! does a modern episcopalian undertake the defence of every absurdity exhibited to the world, by every thing called in times past a bishop? Or shall a modern non-conformist adopt all the weaknesses of every one who was persecuted out of the established communities? All orders of men examine and reform themselves: do men in black alone intend to render impropriety immutable and everlasting? I have exemplified the absurdities complained of by Mr. Claude by the works of our ancestors who are dead and gone, on purpose to avoid offending. Indeed this was necessary; for who alive has one impropriety to quote?"

Robinson adds, " I designed to have added

to these two, a third volume of the same size, entitled, "An Essay toward an History of Public Preaching." I have, however, laid aside the plan, made use of a few extracts in these notes, torn, burnt, and given away most of the other papers, and patterns of sermons, that I had collected, and never more intend to resume the subject."

To complete, therefore, the view taken of Robinson as a public speaker, it should be observed, that, in all his public lectures, the principles above related were for many years conspicuous: his mode of address was simple and insinuating, his eloquence easy and natural, his tone modest and unassuming; his countenance expressed benevolence, and his doctrines, though favouring of Calvinism, did not confine themselves to the strictness of that system. He carried little of the air of a preacher for a party, except when his discourses were interspersed (which was often, indeed, the case) with political reflections, or with observations on the established hierarchy. On the Essay two general and concluding remarks may be made: Those who cannot read the notes, may approve the Essay; and, Those who pay little regard to the Essay, may receive both amusement and instruction from the notes.

From various passages in the notes, the readers

ers must conclude that Robinson, though not what is called a violent, was yet a sound Calvinist: the following hyperbolical panegyric on Calvin may be reckoned curious, when considered in connection with his subsequent declarations.

“ There is no abridging this sententious commentator,” he remarks: “ and the more I read him, the more does he become a favourite expositor with me.” Calvinus, ait Scaliger, solidus theologus et doctus, styli sat purgati, et elegantioris quam theologum deceat. Ille literas sacras tractavit, ut tractandæ sunt, vere, inquam et pure, et simpliciter, sine ullis argumentationibus scholasticis: et divino vir præditus ingenio multa divinavit, quæ non nisi a linguæ Hebræicæ peritissimis (cujusmodi tamen ipse non erat) divinari possunt.

“ O le grand homme ! Il n’y a ancien à comparer à lui. Il a si bien entendu l’écriture ! *Solus Calvinus in Theologicis.* “ Calvin,” says Scaliger, “ is a solid and learned theologian ; his style is sufficiently chastened, and more elegant, than becomes a theologian. He handled the sacred writings, as they ought to be handled : I mean, with an eye to truth, with purity, and with simplicity, without any scholastic reasonings. Possessed of a divine genius, he divined many things, that can only be divined by the most skilful

skilful in the Hebrew language (of which number, however, Calvin was not). Oh, the great man! So well did he understand the scriptures. Among theologians Calvin stands alone.—Scaligerana, Calvinus*.

A little time after the publication of Claude, viz. in May 1779†, our author printed a single discourse, hereafter to be noticed in a list of his sermons, and smaller publications. Some of Saurin's sermons he still, occasionally, translated; the whole not being published, as hinted before, till a considerable time after the first volumes were before the public: all that concerns that performance, however, it seemed

* See Claude's Essay, vol. i. p. 232.

† It may not be improper to repeat, that Claude's Essay was laid before the public at the close of the year 1778, as appears from letters to Robinson: one correspondent particularly mentions having read it, and returns thanks for the pleasure, that he had received, December 9, 1778. It is, therefore, presumed, that the work must have been out a month prior to that time. Robinson dates the advertisement prefixed to Claude, November 7, 1778.—This circumstance is insisted on, to guard against the imputation of inaccuracy. Dr. Rees, in the Catalogue of our author's publications, subjoined to his two Sermons preached at Cambridge, dates this Essay, as published in 1779. The book, therefore, was probably not advertised till that year: and the title-page is dated 1779.—These Memoirs are, for the most part, regulated by the dates of letters, as being, in general, the safest guides.

more concise to comprehend within the same chapter.

In the year 1779 I left the Cambridge dissenters, after an acquaintance with Robinson for near a twelvemonth.—My original grounds of disapproving the established church; for connecting myself with the Cambridge dissenters, and, afterwards for a temporary desertion of them; as well as for my more intimate relation to dissenting assemblies in future life*, and, at length, for a final separation from all, as associated religious bodies, it would be improper now to unfold. Such particulars would charge the memoirs of Robinson with tedious speculations, motives of conduct, and numerous incidents, foreign to the present volume: the most distant allusion should not have been made to them, but for a few things occasionally mentioned.

* On leaving Emanuel college, Cambridge, I was assigned as a kind of pupil to Robinson by the baptist fund in London. This fund was instituted about eighty years ago, to assist ministers, and students to be prepared for the ministry. For the sum allowed me for a twelvemonth by this fund, during my residence with Robinson, and after turning my back for ever on the church of England, I take this opportunity of paying my acknowledgements to the managers.—I left Robinson at the expiration of the twelvemonth, and went to preach to a dissenting congregation at Oxford in 1781.

But one occurrence happened in 1779, of a nature rather extraordinary, at that time a little interesting to the dissenters, and, particularly, to some of Robinson's intimate friends: it must not, therefore, be left wholly unnoticed.

This year sir Harry Trelawney, of Christ church, Oxford, deserted for a while the church, and connected himself with the dissenters.

This man had been a warm advocate for the Trinity: but his zeal had been cooled by Robinson's Plea for the divinity of Christ: he first attached himself to the orthodox, and preached with great ardour among the methodists: he then joined the rational dissenters:—*rational* is Trelawney's own word.

“ If your pupil,” says Dr. Toulmin, in a letter to Robinson, “ deserted the cause of truth, and went back, we have in this neighbourhood a nobler example: a young gentleman of distinguished pulpit talents, and very sensible, has withdrawn from the church; and though he has not assumed the character of a dissenting minister, yet, it may be presumed, will do it in the end. Sir Harry Trelawney furnishes here a most complete example of separation from it.”

Trelawney was, at length, ordained among the orthodox dissenters: delivered his Confession of Faith, which was published, together with the Sermons and Charge at his Ordination.—It was after this, that he attached himself to those, whom he called rational dissenters.

A letter was afterwards addressed by sir Harry Trelawney to the reverend Thomas Alcock, M. A. vicar of Runcorn in Cheshire, and of St. Budeaux, Devon, and published. This letter affords sufficient proofs, that Trelawney is a man of letters, not superficially acquainted with the nature of the controversy between the established church, and protestant dissenters. The two points insisted on in the pamphlet, are, first, "that subscription to articles, that we do not believe, is a dishonest, and prevaricating business:" secondly, "that by remaining a dissenter, he secured that freedom of mind, which is the birth-right, and unalterable privilege of every rational creature." It is clear from these pages, that Trelawney, at the time, neither believed the doctrinal articles, nor approved the discipline of the church of England: and yet, almost immediately after the publication, he returned to Oxford, and was ordained.—He is now a country rector, in the West of England.

Whether

Whether Trelawney was offended at the extemporaneous worship of many of the dissenters, and thought that he lost his rank in society by nonconformity,—or whether he at length conceived that he could enjoy greater liberty in the church, and carested himself into subscription by the doctrine of General Expedience, which Paley has settled to every conscience*, is not inquired.—The example is here introduced as a singular phænomenon ; and in order to hold out a remark to dissenters : “ That they rarely obtain preferment by conforming : that when their ministers are ordained in the church, they usually become stationary, and receive little but mortification and disappointment †.”

Sir Harry Trelawney is in small danger of having occasion to apply the following epigram to himself. It was made on the death of a person in Scotland, who died in great agony, after conforming against his conscience, and having gained a mitre.

*Solatur frustra conjux, solantur amici,
Et medicum accersi sedulo quisque jubet :
Sed dare solamen nemo, dare nemo salutem,
Te præter, poterit, Rex Iacobe, mihi.*

* Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy. Vol. II.

† These were Robinson's words on hearing that Trelawney had conformed.

*Quæ corpus gravat, atque animum simul, exue mitram
Huic capiti; hujus onus me premet et perimet *.*

My wife's and friends' consoling words are vain;
Nor can the doctor's skill remove my pain:
Thine hand alone, O James! can aid impart,
Or soothe the anguish of my guilty heart.
The mitre's weight—Oh! raise it from mine head!
This loads my soul—and sinks me to the dead. D.

About this time, Robinson appears to have drawn up some memorials of the ingenious John Bunyan; and the conclusion drawn from his letter was that they were communicated to Dr. Kippis for insertion in the *Biographia Britannica*: and so it was believed by many of his friends.

Dr. Kippis writes to Robinson as follows:
“ We shall be thankful for any communications relative to John Bunyan; and they shall be fully noticed. The article in the old *Biographia* is a meagre one, and requires additions. I shall be glad of them any time within this fortnight.” This letter is dated October 7, 1779.

Symonds, the dissenting minister of the church where Bunyan was pastor, says in a letter to Robinson, “ I am glad to find, that Bun-

* *Piercii Fratrum Nonconformistarum Vindiciæ.*

yan's character will be under your inspection." He then gives a few dates, one or two circumstances relative to Bunyan, and subjoins a small list of books written by him, which Symonds says, "he had never seen." This letter is dated October 30, 1779.

The truth is, no single part of the article on John Bunyan, in the *Biographia Britannica*, was written by Robinson. The passage with the signature B. was composed by Broughton, who wrote in the old *Biographia*. That with the signature T. together with the notes, was written by Dr. Towers: and independently of what that judicious writer says, "that he never received any communications on that article from Robinson," the perusal of the article will bring to the same conclusion. For Dr. Towers's authorities quoted, are from the usual sources of information: and of the small list of books, mentioned by Symonds, the only material circumstance in his letter, no notice is taken.—There is also a note in the article, John Bunyan, written by Dr. Kippis: but this, also, is foreign to the contents of Symonds's letter. The presumption, therefore, is, that Robinson's observations were not communicated to the *Biographia*, or not received in time. On comparing the dates of the two letters, the latter seems to have been the case.

The information transmitted to the above-mentioned valuable publication, concerning Baker, the learned antiquary, of St. John's college, Cambridge, is interesting and important : to this an allusion has already been made : and it is respectfully acknowledged by the writer, Dr. Towers, in its proper place, with a just tribute to the abilities of Robinson.

Whatever remarks, therefore, might have been prepared on Bunyan's life, were, most probably, published afterwards in the *Biographia Evangelica* : since, in a letter dated October 26, 1781, E. Middleton, a clergyman of the established church, editor of that work, writes to him as follows : " I shall also think myself obliged to you to remember the life of good John Bunyan, which you was so kind as to promise me."—Mention having been made of the *Biographia Britannica*, it may afford pleasure to ingenuous readers, to trace that spirit of candour, that guided the pen of Dr. Kippis, the late much respected editor of that work.

The following is an extract from one of his letters to Robinson :

" DEAR SIR,

" I am not a little entertained with Mr. ——'s apprehensions : and, in truth, he hath some reason

reason to be alarmed. It is possible that I may find niches for heroes whom he may not admire, and that I may introduce reflections which he will not entirely approve.

“ However, if you shall think proper to wait upon him again, I desire, with my compliments to him, to inform him, that, whatever my sentiments may be on some points, I wish to do full justice to men of merit and learning of every party; that I am solicitous to have the *Biographia* a repository of authentic facts; that, in that view, it cannot fail of being very useful, notwithstanding any incidental remarks of the editors; and that we will insert, with fidelity and respect, the communications with which we may be favoured. We hope so to conduct the work, as that persons of literature will not repent of their aid.”

Among Robinson's correspondents this year, are Robert Barlow, of Boston; Dr. Kippis; Samuel Palmer, editor of the *Nonconformists' Memorial*; Thomas Dunscombe, a baptist minister, of Bampton, Oxfordshire; Commissary Greaves, of Fulbourne, Cambridgeshire; Isaac Hunt, of Liffon Green, a clergyman of the church of England; John Lombard, a dissenting minister, of Sudbury; and a few others already mentioned.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

Plan of a New College, which Robinson attempted to institute at Cambridge, and other liberal Projects; his Tour into Scotland.

IN the year 1781, our author formed a design, communicated to few persons, that did him great honour. The reason for mentioning it so early, proceeds from the paucity of materials for the present chapter; but, particularly, from the consideration, that, though he committed not the plan to paper, till a subsequent period, yet it became the favourite exercise of his meditation about this time.

The dissenters in this country have been unjustly debarred from the advantages of the universities; and, in former times, treated with contempt for the very reasons, that entitled them to honour: for is not a man, excluded from literary benefits, on account of his adherence to speculative conclusions that his judgement approves, and which he has not sufficient sophistry to evade, entitled to the praise of integrity, and to the honourable appellation of "a witness to the truth?" Established systems

tems are founded in a concealed injustice, and by an easy consequence, produce an insidious oppression.—The academic triumphs in the superior opportunities of gaining science in universities; and the priest draws ostentatious comparisons, grounded on such opportunities, between himself, and nonconformists. Concede these superior opportunities; allow, that the priest, which is now and then the case, hath reaped the fruit of them: but how unjust the triumph! How dishonourable, how malignant the comparison! On the one hand we behold a man erect, insulting one on his knees; on the other, perhaps, a generous mind revolting at absurd and insolent creeds, accused of ignorance, as a kind of crime, though deprived of the means of knowledge, through his love of truth.

The tendency of established systems is here alluded to; not their necessary consequences. The dissenter is frequently a wise man; priests are not always conjurors.

But how superficial these systems! How ridiculous their caution! How inevitable their destruction!

These reflections are not designed as vindications of any system of sectarian principles: but

but as a testimony against every system of injustice. Ye painted masses of putridity, may your deformity be exposed by the light of philosophy! May that brood of evils, that ye have engendered, be speedily crushed by the genius of liberty!

Robinson was aware of the disadvantages, under which his own party laboured in this respect. It is true, they have had among them a few persons, whose abilities and learning all parties are willing to acknowledge: such as Dr. Gale, Dr. Foster, and Dr. Gill*.

But through their former depression, through their exclusion from public schools, and universities, the baptists had possessed few distinguished scholars. For though Dr. Ward, a man, himself, of extensive literature, had settled a few exhibitions on their students at the university of Aberdeen; and though a house of literature was appropriated to their use at Bristol; yet the exhibitions for Aberdeen were very few; and the Bristol institution, as the late

* Dr. Gale was an eminent Greek scholar, and, as a theologian, acquired great reputation by his controversy with Wall. Foster was a modest and learned Socinian preacher; and Gill, the Calvinist preacher, was a profound Hebraist.

president,

president, Dr. Evans, was willing to acknowledge, laboured under considerable defects. Robinson's wish, therefore, was, that his party might enjoy the literary advantages of an English university, without being subject to its theological shackles. He, accordingly, drew up a scheme, and submitted it to some of the more learned and wealthy of them.—To his own eye, like many other theories, that he could never realise, it seemed to carry a long train of blessings, and dazzled with its lustre, but it never became stationary.

To what cause it was owing, that this college was never founded, it is unnecessary to conjecture. Robinson was certainly much in earnest: the writings were drawn up by his friend Capel Lofft, then a barrister in the Temple; and it was the wish of Robinson, as appears from many of his letters, though to me he never communicated his design, that I should have been employed as a tutor: but, indeed, the wavering state of my mind left small room for any confidential repose in my exertions; and my subsequent rejection of baptism, the badge of this intended college, would have raised an insuperable difficulty in the way of my future success.

For the failure of this flattering scheme,
many

many reasons may be assigned; and probably some reasonable objections might be urged against it. But to form conjectures is unnecessary: Robinson himself became, at length, less popular with his own party: and, without looking out for any other reasons, his theories were less likely to obtain general acceptance.

All that is necessary to lay before the reader, is taken from extracts from two letters. To Daniel Turner, a dissenting minister, in Berkshire, he says,

“ I have been thinking of your hints of an endowed college for dissenting education, and wish you could think of any way to effect it. We want a college for law and physic, and for gentlemen of independent fortunes. Our interest has suffered much from this deficiency, by the sons of such gentlemen being sent to our universities, who, of course, left us to go over to the church. This was the case of Lord Barrington, and several families in this neighbourhood. Mr. Atkins has an house near Wantage, that would do: he might, if he would, endow it with a thousand a year; if you have opportunity, feel his pulse about the matter, as fully as you can.”

Atkins, mentioned in this letter, was a man
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of extensive fortune, who lived at Clapham, in Surrey; his country residence was in Kingston Lisle, Berkshire. He is now dead; but was well known for his liberality while living, and will be long remembered with gratitude, though now no more. Robinson calls him "a perfect gentleman, an excellent scholar, and a good man."

This institution lay much on Robinson's mind, though afterwards he thought Cambridge the proper place for it.

In another letter, he speaks as follows:

"In regard to the other article, literary foundation, our cause wants good sterling literature. Private schools have not academical advantages. Scotch universities oblige us to exchange religion for learning: we value the last, but not so highly, as to purchase it at such a price. I have supposed, if we could take about six boys, and educate them at Cambridge, so that they might have all the literary advantages of the university, without the shackles, and vices, these boys might, in a few years, open an house of literature, and might educate two sorts of lads,—poor boys by charitable subscription; and gentlemen's sons at their own expense. Such as were pious might be ministers; such

as were not, might practise physic, law, &c. and save all that money to the cause, in a course of business, which now we pay churchmen for. I know a gentleman who would give books, manuscripts &c. to such a house, worth 1000l. Dr. Stennett says they have the interest of two or three thousand pounds in the funds for purposes of education; and he will try to turn it into this channel, if it can be realised. Long had I wished to realise this. Call me an enthusiast if you will: I will tell you what I call a singular providence."—Then follows a friendly and too flattering account of me.

Other humane projects of Robinson's obtained better success. Among those that lay nearest his heart, was the establishment of a society to assist poor ministers, denominated the Cambridge Society for the relief of protestant dissenting ministers. The committee, consisting of seven persons, met at the vestry of the meeting-house at Cambridge, each benefactor subscribing a guinea, and upwards,—those who contributed one guinea, recommended one case; subscribers of two guineas, two cases, and so on. Was not this a more honourable way of assisting dissenting ministers, than by Regium Donum? Every thing relative to this institution may be gathered from the following letter: and of the Regium Donum, or king's bounty, future mention shall be made.

“ REVEREND

" REVEREND BROTHER,

" Several humane gentlemen having observed the necessities of many dissenting ministers, their widows and families, and being desirous to administer to their relief, have formed themselves into a society for this purpose : they propose receiving subscriptions from individuals and from churches, and to make an annual dividend of the money so subscribed among such necessitous cases as shall come before them. If only two hundred churches subscribe annually one guinea each, the society will be enabled to distribute ten pounds a year, more or less, to twenty of the two hundred who are most in want. The subscriptions to be paid on or before the last day in December, either to the pastor of the baptist church at Cambridge, or to their agent in London, Henry Keene, esquire, Walworth. Dividends will be made annually on the fifteenth of January, and the money punctually remitted. " If this benevolent plan meet with your approbation, we trust you will encourage it.—I am, sir,

" For the Society,

" Your Humble Servant,

" A. B. Secretary."

Another institution founded by Robinson was,
a Society for constitutional information. The

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object

object of this was the same as that established in London by Dr. Jebb, major Cartwright, Capel Lofft, and others. On the formation of the London constitutional society in April 1780, Capel Lofft sent Robinson a copy of their address, and an account of their proceedings: these served as models for the constitutional society at Cambridge.

In a letter to a friend, written some years after, in which Robinson describes a meeting of the mayor, several aldermen and others of the corporation, to celebrate the revolution of 1688, he observes, " They wound up and confirmed my sermons, by good revolutionary songs. The truth is, by a constitutional society of freeholders, which I had the pleasure of forming amongst a few dissenters, and which is multiplied into a very large body of freeholders of liberal sentiments, a great respectability, because a great political weight, is acquired to the dissenters of both town and country. We meet once a quarter at an inn, and dine together,—a part of us, I mean: and there, as the complaisance of the company often gives me the chair, I preach civil and religious liberty, and often, when tea comes, theology,—not *points*, but general, and, I judge, useful truths."

When the subject of the slave trade was discussing,

cussing, it was impossible for Robinson not to feel interested ; he, accordingly, preached, and, in 1788, published on the occasion ; and, if I mistake not, the first petition to the House of Commons on this business was from Cambridge. It was drawn up by Robinson, is admirably composed, and deserves to be recorded in these memoirs.

“To the honourable the Commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled.

“The humble petition of the gentry, clergy, freeholders and others in the county of Cambridge, sheweth,

“ That your petitioners, understanding that the slave trade is likely to become a subject of parliamentary investigation, cannot help expressing their most earnest desire of a change in the present system of African trade.

“ Your petitioners are aware, that Britain derives innumerable benefits from her plantations, and that the plantations depend upon the labours of negroes : but they are not convinced, that a slave trade is necessary to a supply of labourers. They abhor slavery in every form, and that kind most of all, which renders cruelty necessary to the safety of the slaveholders.

“ Your petitioners humbly represent, that a slave trade is neither just, nor safe, nor, in the present case, productive ; for it obstructs other branches of traffic, which promise far greater national advantages.

“ Nor can your petitioners help observing with sorrow, that a slave trade is a dishonour to humanity, a disgrace to our national character, utterly inconsistent with the sound policy of commercial states, and a perpetual scandal to the profession of Christianity.

“ Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray this honourable house to take the premises into consideration, and to grant such relief as they in their great wisdom shall see fit.

“ And your petitioners, as in duty bound, shall ever pray.”

The last humane project formed by Robinson was a Charity-school for boys and girls of protestant dissenters, to be supported by subscription. The school was established, but its duration was not long : subscriptions soon failed, and the school was discontinued. This charity, if I mistake not, was set on foot in the year 1780.

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These several schemes are comprehended in the same chapter, though formed at different periods ; this arrangement appearing more concise and uniform.

The latter part of the year 1780 Robinson spent in an agreeable tour into Scotland in company with his Trumpington friends, and one of his sons. In his way he tarried some time at Oxford, to see what was curious in the university, and to preach civil and religious liberty to a little society of dissenters, then forming themselves into what is called *church order* : for their use, principally, he afterwards published a small pamphlet entitled, “ The General Doctrine of Toleration, applied to the particular case of Free Communion.”

He likewise visited his Berkshire friends, particularly the congregation under the care of Daniel Turner, of Abingdon.

Having left Oxford, he no longer travelled in his ministerial character : and the many entertaining letters, sent to distinct branches of his family, relate more to the face of the country, the nature of the soil, manufactures, commerce, feats, castles, and natural curiosities, than to the cure of souls or the discipline of churches. He was now determined not to

make himself known to the dissenting congregations in the towns through which he passed: having found, by his popularity, that it would have been impossible to proceed on his journey. He had preached to such multitudes in the little meetings in Oxford and Abingdon, that he got violent colds. He accordingly assumed a less faintly garb, disguising himself in light clothes,—white stockings,—scratch wig,—round beaver hat,—band and buckle.—The exterior appearance of the clerical character, and the concomitant title of “Reverend,” Robinson, at this period of his life, secretly considered as ridiculous: he, however, conformed to received customs and prejudices: though no one could lay aside the manners of the priest with greater facility and address.

If our limits would permit, we should with pleasure accompany him on this journey, and report from his letters various particulars, that would afford both pleasure and instruction to our readers: but we should be tempted to proceed further than would be consistent with our leading design.

We shall, therefore, only observe, that, had we been writing for the amusement of Dr. Johnson, we should certainly have transcribed Robinson’s Letters from Edinburgh: but that
city

city is now considerably improved ; the letters likewise would be too long for this part of our narrative. We, therefore, only observe, in Robinson's words, " that he and his company would have staid longer at Edinburgh, if they could have been reconciled to nastiness."—He was, however, highly gratified with the civilities shewn him by some of the literati ; more particularly, by Dr. Robertson the historian : he might have received the diploma of doctor in divinity ; but observed, afterwards, that " so many egregious dunces had been made D. D.s both at English as well as Scotch and American universities, that he declined the compliment."

CHAPTER XIV.

Robinson's Character as a Farmer.

OUR readers have already been acquainted, that Robinson came to Chesterton in 1773. Here he at first hired, and in 1775 purchased a house. A considerable portion of his time had, for several years, been employed in repairs, and improvements.

In the autumn of the year 1775, he pulled down the back part of the house, it being in decay; and built a coal cellar, a kitchen, a pantry, a lower store-room, a staircase, and upper store-room, a passage, and three chambers; some rooms he also floored, and repaired all the staircase, an upper store-room, a passage, and three chambers.

In 1776, he felled a good deal of timber in the close, stubbing up, at the same time, the bushes, cutting down the banks, filling up the swamps, and levelling the whole. He then planted two quicks, and several small trees. After fencing, ditching, and manuring the field, he sowed the sward with grass seed. On May the thirteenth of the same year, he was
admitted

admitted at the lord's court to the said copyhold estate, consisting of one tenement, with stables, barn, yard, orchard, three cow commons, &c. called by the name of the Roebuck; and of one close of pasture called Sheep's close, consisting of about an acre.

In the year 1779, by the consent of the conservators and the lord of the manor, he embanked, raised, levelled, fenced, and planted a mudshoal, partly for a garden, partly for a grass piece, and partly for a farm-yard: there also he built a bath, which was intended for a baptistery.

In the summer of the same year the old stable, barn, and wash-house were pulled down, and, on the opposite side of the yard, were rebuilt. He now began to be much engaged with workmen, which was his great delight, and borrowed the language and manners of a farmer. This part of his history must not be hurried over too hastily: his character derived much of its complexion from rural employments.

On the twentieth of May 1782, he purchased a farm called the Hand, held by lease of Trinity college, Cambridge. This consisted of a dwelling-house, one stable, two barns, two hog-styes, a cart-lodge, a farm-yard, two gardens,

dens, a paddock, eighty acres, three roods and a half of arable land, ten cow-commons, summing six horses, &c. On purchasing the farm he pulled down the old dwelling-house, the stable, the hog-styes, the barley-barn, and all the buildings except the wheat-barn. A new brick dwelling-house, a boarded stable, a cow-house, a cow-hospital, six cart-lodges, two hog-styes, a hay-loft, a small barley-barn, were built, and ten feet added to the wheat-barn, a new floor opened, and boarded sides, two new pumps, fences, &c. added. The foundation of the house was laid July the first, and all was finished by Michaelmas.

In the harvest of the year 1782, he bought of alderman Purchase eighty-five acres, two roods of arable land ; five acres of pasture, copy-hold ; four houses, copy-hold : the conveyances are dated October 30, 1782 : these estates were let to several tenants. He however retained two houses, together with land, &c. so that he had sufficient land to employ him as a farmer ; his situation near the river Cam was favourable also to the business of a merchant : a barn, therefore, he turned into a coal-shed ; and traded both in coals and corn,

Robinson we must now consider as a man of business, and, indeed, of property : but, how he thus suddenly became possessed of sufficient property

perty to make these purchases, and expensive repairs, may not be obvious: that he did not acquire it by public preaching, is certain. His salary could not even equal the wants of his numerous family.

To a mere impertinent inquisitiveness little respect is due; but it becomes the duty of a biographer to prevent unwarrantable conclusions, and to meet illiberal objections. All therefore of Robinson's affairs that I actually know, or conjecture by inference, shall be laid before the reader.—For this property he was partly indebted to his own literary labours, partly to the gratuitous civilities of private friendship.

For his *Arcana*, printed in 1774, he received twenty guineas. In 1775, two volumes of Saurin's Sermons were published by subscription. They were productive, but to what amount, I know not. In 1777, a third volume of Saurin's Sermons appeared. During the delay of publishing the fourth volume of Saurin's Sermons, Claude's Essay made its appearance: for this he received 400*l*. For his *Political Catechism*, published in 1782, he received twenty guineas.

To other persons, he had been occasionally
indebted,

indebted, as appears from letters; but his friends at Trumpington were his most liberal patronesses: while they concealed with all the reserve of delicacy their liberality, and guarded against those impertinences, which characterise vulgar minds, their friendship was, I had like to have said, profuse. With them Robinson lived on terms of the greatest intimacy, attached to them no less for their superiour understanding and goodness, than for their personal kindnesses. And let it not be reckoned out of character, if I take this opportunity of expressing my obligations to them during this period.

It, however, may not be improper to notice, that Robinson's judgement had in the estimation of these persons its value, as well as his friendship; and they considered themselves indebted to him, as well for his general attention to their interest when at Trumpington, as for securing to them a considerable sum of money, which they had been in danger of losing.

On the production of the other works of Robinson, it is unnecessary to dwell. The above were the original sources of the property that he possessed; and his good sense enabled him to make profitable purchases.

That a minister of the gospel should thus devote

vote himself to mercantile employments, was by many of his Christian brethren construed to his disadvantage. But all illiberal imputations he submitted to without difficulty : and the only notice they received from Robinson were smiles at their impertinence. " Godly boobies," he would say, " too idle, many of them, to work, too ignorant to give instruction, and too conceited to study, spending all their time in tattling and mischief,—are these the men to direct my conduct, to censure my industry ?" His sentiments concerning such reverend busy-bodies may be collected from the following letter written to a worthy minister, Thomas Duncombe of Bampton, Oxfordshire.

" Chesterton, November 14, 1785.

" DEAR SIR,

" I own it gives me a great deal of pleasure to see any of the ministers of our churches address themselves to honest employments in life; there are many reasons to induce us to do so. Idleness is abominable, and the pretence of study is a joke, where a man hath not more books than he can read over in a month. Besides, what is there to find out? A catholic had need be a subtle dog, and furnished with all the lore of the schools, to make the New Testament speak in favour of his church: but a baptist, whose whole religion lies in believing
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a few plain facts, and in imitating that very plain example, Jesus Christ,—what hath he to do to rack his invention, and to assemble all apologies, ancient and modern, to justify him for doing so? Oh! but there are some beautiful readings, and fine criticisms, and strokes of oratory, which deserve the study of a minister of Christ! Well, God forgive me, poor sinner that I am! I feel three pounds, gained honestly by the sale of a fat bullock, produce more fire in my spirit, than all those pretty, but poor tassels and spangles, can give me. With three pounds I can set fire to ten cold hearts frozen with infirmity and widowhood, poverty and fear. Half a guinea will purchase the native eloquence of a grateful old woman: and she, if I set her to read, will give me a criticism of the heart, and the finest reading in the world. Oh! bless the old soul! what honied accents she pours into my ear! If I can honestly get, and afford to give away three pounds, it will always be my own fault, if I be not very happy. Now then set me to preach. How is it possible I should be dull! The luxury of living to the glory of God, and the good of society; the joy of having saved a forlorn and forgotten cripple from hanging herself in despair; the felicity of setting fire to incense that burns to the glory of God; these are preparations for the pulpit, which the cold consumer of midnight oil never derives

derives from his accents and quantities. I was the other night in our vestry with several gownsmen just before the lecture. In comes one of my sister Abigails. "How do you do, Sarah? I am glad to see you returned safe from visiting your family at Soham."—"Bless the Lord, Sir, I am. We heard Mr. Watts on the Lord's day, and were very much edified indeed! But the day after we were coming out of town, my husband saw him—and poor creature, he was so shocked".—O Sir—thunder-struck at all this, I trembled, expecting to hear before the gown, that my poor brother Watt was seen drunk, or some such thing. Lord, thought I, happy is that man who hath not a foolish babbling good woman in his congregation. I looked pale. Sarah went on, "O Sir, there was the poor man on the top of a ladder a thatching a rick." I laughed, but stamped, and said, "Have I bestowed so much instruction upon you and your husband for nothing? Are you yet in a state of infancy? I honour the man, and must be acquainted with him." "Dear Sir, he works five days, and has only Saturday to study."—"Well, Sarah, I shall try to convince him, that he ought to work six days: for one day will never make him a scholar, and his people are only a set of turf-diggers: and fourteen pence more in his pocket every Lord's day, will make him preach with more vigour, and
rattle

rattle the gospel with more power into the turf-men's souls. I appeal to these learned gentlemen." After all, the prejudices of the common people are very great against the secular employments of ministers ; and while we pursue them, we should take care, and not give any unnecessary offence. This last seed-time I was in the field along with a young gentleman who looks after my farm, and he was digging a water-furrow across a land. It was a strong clayey soil, and he groaned, so that in pity I took the spade and went into the ditch, which was very dauby, and presently groaned too, at which he fell a laughing.—What do you laugh at? " Pardon me, Sir : I recollected that a minister lately said in his sermon, that preaching was the hardest work that was done under the sun." I wish the fool was in this ditch : he would soon learn that some of his authors had taught him to tell fibs. Farewell, my most affectionate friend ; industry, plenty, frugality, prosperity, generosity, and piety be with you. Amen.

" Yours ever,

" ROBERT ROBINSON."

It must not, however, be inferred, that Robinson's agricultural and commercial engagements destroyed his taste for literature, or that his attention to labourers and farmers interrupted

rupted his intercourse with men of letters. His correspondents throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, were numerous and respectable; and the applications made to him to settle differences, and to arbitrate difficult cases, (for he became a kind of chamber-council to many dissenting congregations) were still very considerable. A valuable domestic, indeed, afterwards united to him by filial attachment, William Curtis, exonerated him of many cases, both in business and in the field, and rendered him essential service as an amanuensis.

The following letter, though written at a later period, will be a-propos to the present chapter.

“ Chesterton, May 26, 1784.

“ OLD FRIEND,

“ You love I should write folios: that depends upon circumstances, and if the thunderstorm lasts, it will be so: but what a sad thing it is to be forced to write, when one has nothing to say? Well, you shall have an apology for not writing,—that is, a diary of one day.

“ Rose at three o’clock—crawled into the library—and met one who said, “ Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light—the night cometh, when no man can work—my father worketh hitherto,

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and

and I work."—Rang the great bell, and roused the girls to milking—went up to the farm, roused the horse-keeper—fed the horses while he was getting up—called the boy to suckle the calves, and clean out the cow-house—lighted the pipe, walked round the gardens to see what was wanting there—went up the paddock to see if the weanling calves were well—went down to the ferry, to see whether the boy had scooped and cleaned the boats—returned to the farm—examined the shoulders, heels, traces, chaff, and corn of eight horses going to plough—mended the acre staff—cut some thongs, whip-corded the boys' plough whips—pumped the troughs full—saw the hogs fed—examined the swill-tubs, and then the cellar—ordered a quarter of malt, for the hogs want grains, and the men want beer—filled the pipe again, returned to the river, and bought a lighter of turf for dairy-fires, and another of fedge for ovens—hunted up the wheelbarrows, and set them a trundling—returned to the farm, called the men to breakfast, and cut the boys bread and cheese, and saw the wooden bottles filled—sent one plough to the three-roods, another to the three-half-acres, and so on—shut the gates, and the clock struck five—breakfasted—set two men to ditch the five roods—two more to chop fads, and spread about the land—two more to

throw up muck in the yard—and three men and six women to weed wheat—set on the carpenter to repair cow-cribs, and set them up till winter—the wheeler to mend up the old carts, cart-ladders, rakes, &c. preparatory to hay-time and harvest—walked to the six-acres, found hogs in the grass—went back, and sent a man to hedge and thorn—sold the butcher a fat calf, and the suckler a lean one—the clock strikes nine—walked into barley-field—barleys fine, picked off a few tiles and stones, and cut a few thistles—the peas fine, but foul; the charlock must be topped—the tares doubtful; the fly seems to have taken them—prayed for rain, but could not see a cloud—came round to the wheat-field—wheats rather thin, but the finest colour in the world—sent four women on to the shortest wheats—ordered one man to weed the ridge of the long wheats—and two women to keep rank and file with him in the furrows—thistles many—blue-bottles no end—traversed all the wheat-field—came to the fallow field—the ditchers have run crooked—set them straight—the flag-sads cut too much, rush-sads too little, strength wasted, shew the men how to three-corner them—laid out more work for the ditchers—went to the ploughs—set the foot a little higher, cut a wedge, set the coulter deeper, must go and get a new mould-board against to-morrow—went to the other plough—

picked up some wool, and tyed over the traces—mended a horse-tree, tyed a thong to the plough-hammer—went to see which lands wanted ploughing first—sat down under a bush—wondered how any man could be so silly as to call me *reverend*—read two verses, and thought of his loving kindness in the midst of his temple—gave out, “Come all harmonious tongues,” and set mount Ephraim tune—rose up—whistled—the dogs wagged their tails, and on we went—got home—dinner ready—filled the pipe—drank some milk—and fell asleep—woke by the carpenter for some flats, which the sawyer must cut—the Reverend Messrs A. in a coat, B. in a gown of black, and C. in one of purple, came to drink tea, and to settle, whether Gomer was the father of the Celts and Gauls and Britons, or only the uncle—proof sheet from Mr. Archdeacon—corrected it—washed—dressed—went to meeting, and preached from, *the end of all things is at hand, be ye sober and watch unto prayer*—found a dear brother *reverence* there, who went home with me, and edified us all out of Solomon’s song, with a dish of tripe out of Leviticus, and a golden candlestick out of Exodus.—Really and truly we look for you and Mrs. Keene and Mr. Dore at harvest; and if you do not come, I know what you all are.—Let Mr. Winch go
where

where he can better himself. Is not this a folio? And like many other folios?

“ R. ROBINSON.”

“ HENRY KEENE, Esq.”

The intelligent reader will perceive, that one object of the preceding letter, is, to rally useless priests, idle and unprofitable professors of religion, and pompous scribblers about nothing, “ fruges consumere natos,” men who seem only born to devour the fruits of the earth:—an honest, industrious day-labourer may be worth a score of such men.

CHAPTER XV.

Robinson's Engagement to write the History of the Baptists: his Character, as a Politician.

IN the year 1781, the baptists, lamenting that they had no authentic history of the English baptists, invited Robinson to collect materials and to execute the work. He received at the same time offers of access to the British Museum: and Dr. Gifford, who, as observed before, was a baptist, and one of the librarians, being advanced in age, it became necessary, that the performance should be undertaken without delay.

Some of the baptists, therefore, residing in London, associated on this occasion, and formed a committee, at which Dr. Gifford presided: when the following resolutions were adopted: "At a meeting at the King's head in the Poultry, November 6, 1781,—present, reverend Dr. Gifford in the chair, reverend Messrs. Ebenezer Smith, Samuel Rolls, Timothy Thomas, Henry Keene esquire, Messrs. John Middleton, William Savill, Richard Lloyd, Robert Westley, Joseph Hughes, Thomas Pownall, Isaac Cotham, Benjamin Staley, William Sabine,

1. Resolved,

1. Resolved, that a new history of the baptists is a work much to be desired.—2. That the Reverend R. Robinson, of Chesterton, is a proper person to be invited to execute that work; the Reverend Dr. Gifford generously offering him an apartment in his house, for the inspection of manuscripts in the Museum, and every other assistance in his power.—3. Resolved, that the Reverend Mr. Robinson be requested to come up to London, early in the week before the second Lord's day in every month, and stay till the latter end of the following week, for the purpose of collecting materials for the said work; also, that Mr. Robinson be requested to preach the Lectures in London, every journey; and that the Lectures be holden at different places, viz. at Dr. Gifford's, the second Lord's day evening, and at Rev. Mr. Rippon's, on the Tuesdays before and after, at the usual times of their Lectures.—4. Dr. Gifford consenting to invite Mr. Robinson to preach the said Lectures at his place, resolved, that Mr. Keene and Mr. Westley be appointed to give an invitation to Mr. Robinson to preach the said Lectures at his place.—5. That persons be invited to subscribe to the said Lectures, in order to defray the expenses of Mr. Robinson's journeys.—6. That Mr. Robinson be paid five guineas every journey by the treasurer, to be appointed, and the overplus (if any) at the end

of the year.—7. That Mr. Middleton be appointed treasurer.—8. That Mr. Keene be appointed to apply to Mr. Robinson, and his church, for their consent to the above, and to fix the commencement of the Lectures.—9. That Mr. Keene and Mr. Middleton be appointed to conduct the business.

Accordingly Keene wrote to Robinson, and the church, at Cambridge.

This request of the London-committee gave, at first, much disquiet to the church at Cambridge; who were so charmed with their pastor's appearance in the pulpit, that they could scarcely endure any body else. They entertained apprehensions, indeed, that Robinson's popular talents would invite too much admiration, and that the rich dissenters in London would hold out allurements to seduce him from Cambridge. Having, however, considered the matter in every point of view, it was, at length, agreed at a church-meeting, held at Cambridge, 1781, to comply with the request of the London-baptists.

The following answer, written by William Nash, chairman of the Cambridge-committee, and one of the deacons of the church, an upright and well-informed man, shews the esteem
in

in which the pastor was held by this Christian society: it cannot but please many readers.

“Your third resolution, which seemed more materially to affect the church, very naturally produced considerable difficulties; and many suspicions arose in the minds of some of our brethren, lest the execution of the task that our beloved pastor is so warmly solicited to undertake, should lead him into temptations to desert a people that are not ignorant of his value; and, I believe, nothing would have induced an unanimous vote in the church, for his absence one Lord’s day in a month, for a year, (and, perhaps, for a longer time) but the strict injunctions, I may say positive commands, imposed upon me to subjoin to this their consent the obtaining of a promise that your committee will deal with the church, in strict Christian faithfulness;—that you will neither directly, nor indirectly, promote any plan or scheme, that shall eventually tend to remove our pastor from us; nor yet to alter the plan, at present proposed, (either in the present, or any future year, if the work to be undertaken should require it) whereby our pastor shall be from us more than one Lord’s day in a month.”

The committee in London appointed Keene to convey thanks for this compliance, and to assure

sure them, in the strongest terms, that they would act on principles of the strictest honour. Robinson, accordingly, came at the appointed time to collect materials for his history, and preached occasional lectures, agreeably to the proposal.

He was now entering on a new theatre. His talents as a writer had been long acknowledged, though in London he was little known as a preacher. His lectures soon became popular; the meetings where he appeared, uncommonly crowded: and his preaching being usually on questions concerning liberty and religious moderation, he easily conciliated the more liberal of all parties among the dissenters.

But how short-lived is popular admiration! Robinson's mode of public preaching in London was thought, by many of his own party, calculated rather to make men doubt, than believe;—to inquire, rather than convince; his eloquence rather fascinating than solid; his hearers were rarely addressed on those points of doctrine, from whence they derived their comfort; and the orthodoxy of the preacher became suspected. Unfortunately, too, in a pamphlet published about this time, he defended the "Innocence of mere Mental Error," meaning, that men may hold mistaken notions concerning religion, without that guilt
which

which proceeds from a depraved heart. The doctrine was readily embraced by many of his more curious hearers, but the greater part were alarmed. They asserted, that truth was not only important, but essential to salvation. Of Calvinism they would not abate a single article; and though Robinson professed himself a moderate Calvinist, they thought him an un-sound man, wavering between the doctrines of Arius and Socinus.

Robinson now attended, occasionally, at the Museum, in order to collect materials for his history, but found not so much satisfaction on the subjects he wished to investigate, as he expected: besides, preaching and visiting were unforeseen interruptions to his pursuits.

How little leisure he was likely to find to examine manuscripts, and to collect historical materials, such at least, as he required, may be inferred from an extract of a letter from his esteemed friend, Henry Keene.

“ As in your favour of the 26th of March, you desired me to adjust your preaching times, with the approbation of your friends, they are as follow;

Tuesday evening, April 15, at Mr. Rippon's.

Thursday

Thursday morning, — 17, at Dr. Stafford's.
 Lord's day morning, — 20, — Dr. Rees'.
 ———— afternoon, ———— Maze Pond.
 ———— evening, ———— Little St. Helen's.
 Monday evening, — 21, — Maze Pond Vestry.
 Tuesday evening, — 22, — Mr. Rippon's.
 Wednesday morning, — 23, — Maze Pond.

and afterwards to dine with your friends, at the Grove-House, Lambeth.

His design, therefore, in coming to London, was eventually defeated; and in order to proceed in his history, he was obliged to retire into the country. He had, however, formed a scheme, the completion of which required but a separation from those interruptions attendant on popularity, and the free use of public libraries;—and after all, Chesterton afforded him a far more agreeable retreat, and better accommodations than London; for he had not only obtained, through the kindness of some masters of arts in the university, free access to that invaluable treasure of literature contained in the public library, but the liberty of having any books conveyed to his house that he wished.

The persons to whom Robinson principally acknowledged himself indebted for these great advantages, it would afford me pleasure to enumerate :

merate: but some of them I know not, and of others more particular mention will be made hereafter, as men of enlarged minds, and of benevolent hearts. None have a title to the advantages of the public library but academics. These circumstances are mentioned, because Robinson was a dissenter, and the use of the library was to him very great; and because Robinson always felt with respect, and acknowledged with gratitude, his obligations. From the noise of the great city,—from the obtrusion of excessive admiration,—from idle flattery, and frequent mortifications, he yielded to the retirement of a village, and the groves of Academus; his plans were formed anew, and a determination made of publishing his work by subscription. This history was the work of a great many years of close application, and was not published till the year 1790. We, therefore, pass for the present to another subject.

There exists a class of lofty politicians, by whom government is treated, as priests treat religion, like a science too profound to be fathomed by common intellects, or like a fabric too elegant, and too sacred to be touched by the unclean, the unhallowed hands of the vulgar. The comprehension of political science, the arrangement and establishment of political

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institutions,

institutions, are, according to these men, appointed by a divine invisible agent, and transferred to the administration of a transcendent personage, his vicegerent in this lower world. To augment the splendour of this august character, inferior dignities are called in, enclosed with the bright emblazonry of hereditary greatness, and decorated with the exterior pomp of official magnificence. These sagacious speculatists, like the ancient Epicureans, who maintained, that the liberty of the will flows from a right line out of a curve, reverse the interests and claims of a community; and become advocates for the crooked manœuvres of a few lucky spirits, fortunate by birth, or blest with affluence. In comparison with these politicians, how mere a novice was Aristotle! This philosopher did but resign the reins of government to such as nature had endowed with talents, corresponding to the character of a governor*. The other men possessed the *holy oil*, by which even fools were made Solomons. The doctrine of Jus Divinum established tyranny and slavery by a commission from heaven†.

In the best political writers of the last cen-

* Aristot. de Repub. l. i. c. 4.

† Sir Robert Filmer, in his Patriarcha; see Locke's Discourses on Government.

tury,

tury, Harrington, Milton, Sidney, Penn, and Locke, the frivolous and pernicious prescriptions of political empirics have been exposed with ingenuity and learning. In their valuable writings we trace the luminous and salutary parts of ancient and modern theories: the genuine principles of liberty are conspicuous throughout: supposing, that the English form of government preserved these principles sacred, they became its zealous defenders, not as lately administered by defiled hands, but as seen in the purer days of the ancient Saxons *.

The writers, who, for several years past, have been admired by English politicians, are Montesquieu and Blackstone. The Spirit of Laws, and the Commentaries on the Laws of England, unfold the principles of liberty; they display the English constitution, as a model, exhibiting those principles in perfection. What have these writers performed? The one raised doubts, whether this beautiful theory was ever seen in practice: the other produced such striking instances of partiality and imbecillity,

* Sidney's Discourses on Government, c. iii. § xxvii. xxviii. Hollis's edition, and Miltoni pro Pop. Ang. Def. cap. viii.

as demonstrate, that, so far as seen in practice, it was far from perfection*.

Governments, of late years, have been approached with less confidential deference, and sanctimonious regard. How far they may be pronounced positive blessings, has been doubted by some† : and Thomas Paine's definition has not passed without numerous admirers : " Government," says he, " is an evil, that the wickedness of mankind renders necessary‡." Whether Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero, afford a more accurate definition, may be questioned. Robinson's is just and ingenious. " It is the sentinel," says he, " which watches, that the public labours be not disturbed §."

In the year 1782, Robinson published a Political Catechism. A remark or two shall be made on this work : it proceeds on English constitutional principles.

In a writer, who, with a clearer insight into the interests of civil society, than most men,

* " It is not my business," says Montesquieu, " to inquire, whether the English actually enjoy this liberty or not." *Esprit des Loix*.

† Godwin's Political Justice.

‡ Thomas Paine's Rights of Man.

§ Robinson's Political Catechism.

possessed

possessed the purest motives, is the following judicious observation: " Great advantage would be derived to the community, were our fellow citizens, of the lower classes, properly instructed in the just and constitutional meaning of such terms as the following: Majesty, Subject, Sovereign, Republic, Loyalty, Allegiance, Rebellion, Treason, Prerogative, King's bread, King's armies, my People, &c. We never can expect to behold a proper exertion of the natural good sense, and spirit of the nation, until the understandings, and affections of all orders of men are emancipated from the influence of the false ideas, which ignorance, or the art of designing politicians, has annexed to these expressions *."

At a public meeting in London, where Jebb presided, Robinson heard a similar remark; and, in consequence, produced his excellent little dialogue, entitled, *A Political Catechism*, published in 1782. A parent is here introduced, catechising his son on subjects contained in the following words:—Mysteriousness,—Constitution,—Administration,—Representation,—Taxation,—Responsibility,—Generalissimo,—Aggrandisement,—Emigration.

* A Letter to the Chairman of the Meeting of the Freeholders of Middlesex.

The pamphlet proceeds on these beautiful principles:—

“ P. Indeed I do not speak the language of affection ; I protest, it is the cool voice of my reason. Government, as well as every other science, beheld in the gross, resembles a loaded fruit-tree in autumn ; but, as all the fruits, and foliage, and ramifications of the one, so all the departments of the other, may be reduced to first principles ; and these comprehended, the whole is understood.

“ G. Then, sir, in ten days I shall be able to govern a kingdom.

“ P. No such thing—you must distinguish between theory and practice. These subjects are general principles, absolutely necessary to practice ; but cases and circumstances occur in practice, which require present personal genius and dexterity, in the use and application of these principles.”

The Catechism, therefore, unfolds the theory and practice of government. The first word, *mysteriousness*, as applied to government, is unravelled in a manner truly ingenious and original.—This is an admirable pamphlet on English constitutional principles, for the instruction of

young politicians. Two words only shall be remarked on, as sufficient to delineate our author's political character. These are—Constitution and Representation.

The youth is introduced, saying—

“ G. I have dipped into Judge Blackstone's Commentaries, and I find in one place he calls King, Lords, and Commons, the British Constitution, and in another he says, Members of Parliament are guardians of the Constitution.”

The parent says,—“ Distinguish between government and governors, and you will perceive both his expressions are right.”

Again, Constitution is defined—“ The act of making something what it is, and that something is made law, understanding by it, rule of action, regulation of rights, or civil government; and, “suppose,” says the parent, “I were to affirm, that the municipal law of Great Britain is constituted, or made up of just and virtuous political principles, principles conformable to those of the eternal, immutable, and infallible law of nature; would that elucidate the subject?”

The definition is ingenious.

It is remarkable, that amidst the political discussions lately agitated in France, the name of Montesquieu, long reckoned the first political writer in Europe, was scarcely noticed. Whence happened this singular circumstance? A hint already dropped will furnish a ready answer. The great excellence of the English Constitution consists in its representative character: when politicians fall into raptures on surveying the English Constitution, what is it that excites this enthusiastic admiration? Hear Robinson—

“ P. When we speak of administration, George, we speak of what *is*; but when we speak of representation, we speak of what *ought to be*.

“ G. Would not annual parliaments, and equal representation, put it absolutely out of the power of the whole world to destroy the independence of parliament?

“ G. It should seem so; at least, it is worth trying; but have we a right to these?

“ P. We have both a natural, and constitutional right to these. Septennial parliaments
are

are of late date, triennial are not much older, and it was no longer ago, than the reign of Henry the sixth, that the people at large were deprived of this right, and the qualification of electors for knights of the shire, determined to be the owning of a freehold of the value of forty shillings a year, which, by the way, was then equivalent to twenty pounds of present value."

Then follows "A scheme of the proportion the several counties in England paid to the land tax, in 1693, and to the subsidies, in 1697, compared with the number of members they send to parliament,"

Robinson continues—"In this scheme the proportions are thus considered, viz. That as the whole kingdom sends 513 members to parliament; so the whole of each tax is divided into 513 equal parts; and, the first column shewing the name of the county—the second shews how many of the 513 parts each county paid to the land tax in 1693—the third, how many of the 513 parts each county paid to the subsidies in 1697,—and the fourth, how many of the 513 members each county sends to parliament,

"It appears that Middlesex, which paid 80

Q 3

parts

parts of the tax, and 185 of the subsidy, sent only eight members to parliament; and Cornwall, which paid only eight parts of the tax, and five of the subsidy, sent 44. Is this proportional?

“ G. No surely.

“ P. There is a worse article than this in the present management. Canvassing, carousing, intoxication, bribery, perjury, and all the usual attendants on a modern election, disgrace candidates, and destroy all confidence in them, and, at the same time, deprave and debauch the morals of the whole community. In the democratical part of our constitution, there is an exercise of sovereignty by suffrage: but never was the majesty of democracy so debased as it is in some elections. Candidates lose all reverence for the people, their constituents; and the people, all that respect and reverence for representatives, which men in such high trust should always retain.

“ G. The means being thus ineffectual, the end of representation is not answered.—Is that your meaning, sir?

“ P. Yes, verily. Why is democracy interwoven in our constitution with aristocracy and monarchy?

monarchy? Is it not for the sake of its political virtue? And, if it ceases to be virtuous, will it not yield to the frictions of wisdom and power essential to the other two parts? In such a case, is not the very existence of our constitution in danger, and ought not all possible remedies to be applied? It would be as absurd to deprive the crown of power and the nobles of consultation, as it would be to defraud the people of virtue; I mean all along political virtue, the people's thorough knowledge, just estimation, and actual disposal, by unbiassed suffrage, of their lives, liberties, and properties, and all their natural rights."

Representation, on these principles, in the present state of English politics, is a flattering word; but it is "*vox, et præterea nihil*, a mere empty sound."

There are many persons, though much inclined to long fits of admiration, who can survey such a model with all the coldness of indifference, or, at furthest, with the irritations of disappointed pride. For, what is here exhibited to view? The majesty of the people is conceded to the dignity of the civil magistrate. In one part of the political system is conceived to exist ubiquity, omnipotence, supreme wisdom, and supreme power: the being,

from education, and situation, most liable to mistake, is rendered infallible,—is even placed beyond the reach of reform, by being made irresponsible.

Montesquieu, then, might very reasonably raise doubts, and the French might consider him only a theorist*.

People may be complimented with the title of free-men, without the power of making laws, or controul over the legislators. Do they complain of grievances? Do they assert their rights? They may feel an influence that sports with their distresses, insults their pride, and over-rules every claim.

English politicians, lament over the spirit of departed greatness! Recall the golden days of the illustrious Alfred! Maintain, that if Englishmen enjoy not freedom, yet they ought to be free! That, if they possess not the perfection of a representative government, yet they have a constitutional claim to annual parliaments, and to universal suffrage. Assert, they have a right to bear arms, and to defend their liberties! That, if the military power insult the sacred character of a citizen,

* See David Williams's Lectures on Political Principles.
such

such act is treason against the constitution! Determine the epoch of their constitution, and reason from its original fundamental principles. If one period should be too remote, or too recent, place their model at least in a situation, where we may behold its glory. Should a taunting minister, after all, propose the question, Have they the power to be free? their reply is, "Liberty is the Englishman's birth-right*."

Human systems, how splendid, yet how visionary!—Theories too delicate to be touched, too beautiful to be realised!—Whose very perfection engenders imperfection!—Whose integrity requires constant watching!—Whose powers are making continual encroachments, and require continual restraints.

Robinson was a politician of the first character. The English form of government he approved; and he admired king Log.

Among our author's correspondents up to the

* The intelligent reader will perceive, that, in the above paragraph, truth is not to be attached to every clause. Some curious particulars, and more might be added, may be seen in a very old book, "The Mirrour of Justices," ch. i. sect. iii. Of the first constitutions made by the ancient kings: and in ch. v. sect. ii. Of the defects of the Great Charter: and in sect. iv. v. vi. of the same chapter.

present period, are, besides others already mentioned, the following:—Abraham Atkins, of Clapham;—Joseph Beatson, of Hull;—Dr. Stennett;—S. Rowles, a dissenting minister, in Rotherhithe Road;—Mary Hays, a woman of considerable literary merit;—John Hobson, then a student of Homerton academy, afterwards an independent minister, at Birmingham;—John Stanger, a baptist minister of Bessel-Green, near Sevenoaks;—Henry Keene, of Walworth;—James Dore, a baptist minister, of Maze-Pond, Southwark;—E. Middleton, a clergyman of the established church;—Joseph Middleton, of Lewes;—Charles Edward De Coetlogon, chaplain of the Lock hospital;—John Rogers, late a dissenting minister, in Long-lane, Southwark;—John Kimpton, of Queen's-square, Bartholomew-close;—J. Landys;—J. Wright, of Ipswich;—T. Sockett, of London.

CHAPTER XVI.

*An Account of the Regium Donum Pension conferred
on the Dissenters.*

MENTION has been made more than once of Dr. Stennett, a name well known among the dissenters, and for many years in great estimation with the baptists. An agreeable, rather than a popular preacher, possessed of a good fortune, distinguished by gracious manners, and connected, beyond any of his brethren, with the higher circles, Dr. Stennett, the last of that name, gained a considerable share of reputation among the moderately orthodox of most parties*.

He became acquainted with Robinson, in 1776, or in 1777, and, by introducing him to some highly valued friends, had rendered him essential services. The only letter, however, from Dr. Stennett, among Robinson's papers, is the following:—

* See a Sermon on occasion of Dr. Stennett's death, by Daniel Turner, M. A.

“ London,

“ London, Monday, Aug. 26, 1782.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ You may possibly remember, that some time, I think the latter end, of the year before last, you drew on me, at my desire, for ten guineas. The sending me a receipt was a circumstance, that escaped you. Will you be so good as forgive my putting you to the trouble of sending me one, as there is a chain in my accounts, which I wish to make up thereby. It will particularly oblige me, if you can let me have it in the course of this week. It should run thus:—*being a donation entrusted to his disposal.*

“ Reverend Sir,

“ Your Obedient Humble Servant,

“ SAMUEL STENNETT,”

How extraordinary is this! thought I. Surely, between persons circumstanced as these were; baptists, controversialists, and friends, there must have passed something more of epistolary intercourse. Be this as it may, a breach was made in their friendship, that was never closed; Stennett, on the one hand, might, perhaps, think that Robinson treated the ministerial character with too much levity, and held theological opinions with too much indifference: was envious at superiour talents, or hurt by Robinson's

son's violent attack on the bishops; or, on the other, Robinson might conceive, that Stennett required too much deference; was too courtly among the higher powers, and too complying, for a dissenting minister. Whatever was the immediate, or remote cause of this rupture, it seems proper to notice this letter as leading to a subject of some consequence to the dissenters. The receipt solicited above, was for a sum of money, a portion of what is called *Regium Donum*.

Dr. Stennett, for several years, took the lead among the dissenters in the distribution of this royal bounty, which was a donation bestowed by majesty on the dissenting body, of which a short account here follows, written by a doctor among the dissenters, and extracted from the *London Magazine*, of 1774*.

“ The origin of the *Regium Donum* was in April, 1723.—Fatal æra! for then protestant dissenting ministers first became state pensioners, and ministerial tools. At that time the dissenters expected, what for years before they had justly merited of the Brunswick line,—a complete restoration of all their natural rights

* The writer, as I am informed by a respectable dissenting minister, John Armstrong, was the learned Dr. Mayo, an acquaintance of the late Dr. Johnson, of whom mention is made in Boswell's *Life* of that author.

and

and religious privileges. They had often reason to complain of bishops and statesmen, in former reigns; but, under George the wise and steady, they depended on obtaining the repeal of every statute, which infringed the right of private judgement, violated the liberty of conscience, and made odious distinctions between one good subject and another.

“ Sir Robert Walpole was then chancellor of the Exchequer, a statesman, who knew too well, for the real interests of his country, the passions which are most apt to be predominant in the heart, and whom no man ever equalled in the application of gold. By this he daily converted his enemies into friends, and so charmed even the flaming votaries of liberty, dissenting ministers not excepted, as to reconcile them to corruption, and even to court fetters, and rejoice in them. He had observed, from year to year, the wonderful effects, which the smiles of the treasury-bench had on all ranks of men; and finding that the protestant dissenters, after being many years trifled with, were moving in earnest to obtain deliverance from their bondage, he closeted a few of their ministers whom he thought to have the most influence among their brethren, and who would best answer his purposes. In their presence, he wore the mask of friendship and sanctity—he compli-

complimented them on their great abilities—assured them he had the heartiest zeal for the protestant dissenters, and their interests—lamented the poverty and small incomes of many of their ministers through the kingdom, and that any laws should hang over their heads. The reverend gentlemen (like their successors of the present day) were soon overpowered with his condescension, eloquence, and goodness.—He then declared his readiness to serve them any way, even in parliament, for the repeal of the cruel statutes against them: but the present year, 1723, was a very improper time—he, the greatest friend they had, would not advise them to apply that session; if they did, it would greatly injure, if not ruin the cause; but the postponing it would greatly promote its success in a future period. A respectful postponing of it was very likely to obtain its success; whereas, to bring it on, without any regard to circumstances, or contrary to the advice of the best judges, and their most able advocates, might be called rashness, and would do dishonour to the cause. The language of courtiers and their tools is the same from one generation to another.

“To enforce this reasoning, he drew 500*l.* out of the treasury, by a warrant payable to a surgeon, and which was paid by another agent into

into the hands of nine ministers. The bait was, " Pray receive this for the use and comfort of the widows of dissenting ministers, till administration can more effectually serve your cause." But a strict charge was given with the money, that the matter should be kept very secret. Grateful Sir Robert! to conceal the virtues of his royal master, and not suffer his favourites so much as to speak of this considerable taste of royal bounty, which was also promised to be annual.

" Some few years after, for their good services to administration, and to enable them to do more, the sum was increased and advanced to 850*l.* half yearly. This is the present value of the treasury warrant; but there are large fees and deductions."

What effect this *Regium Donum* has had in preventing unanimity in petitions for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, and in procuring mean and sycophantic addresses, the dissenters are not now to be informed.—This account shall be closed with another extract from the preceding letter.

" Notwithstanding the baneful tendency and effects of the *Regium Donum*, many dissenters have contended, that still it is of great benefit
to

to the interest, as relieving many poor ministers, with their widows and children, repairing their places of worship, and upholding many antipædobaptist congregations in the country, which, without this *royal bounty*, could not exist. But these advocates should consider, that, as the money is not designed by the treasury, so it is not limited by the present almoners, to such uses. But if every farthing were thus applied, what are all its advantages when weighed against the *disgrace* it fixes upon the dissenters, as *pensioners and tools of every administration*?

“ A few years past, a very respectable person, then in a high office, was much offended with his friend, a late eminent dissenting minister near London, for the complaints he made on behalf of his brethren, of the difficulties they laboured under in point of religious liberty; and retorted, “ *it was well known they received A HANDSOME SUM OF MONEY from government to SILENCE their complaints as well as their applications—therefore, they should either NOBLY throw up the grant, or remain in silence.*”

“ The troubles and evils produced by the Regium Donum among the body of ministers themselves, are too well known. It hath been an Achan's *wedge* in their camp: It hath furnished some with means to encourage separa-

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tions,

tions, and support parties and divisions in city and country. It hath enabled former almoners to appear at public collections, charity-dinners, &c. &c. as very rich, or exceedingly generous, to the disparagement of their brethren. The poor country-ministers have esteemed them superlatively benevolent and godlike, believing their donations to be their own property; and have been led to lightly esteem and censure other London-ministers as covetous or hard-hearted, because their benefactions were not equal to those of the *Regium-Donum-men*. But the greatest evil is, it hath procured the almoners an influence and power both in city and country, that is *dangerous* and may be *fatal to the cause at large*.

“The dissenting ministers, by their pusillanimous conduct respecting the *Regium Donum*, (which, with equal propriety, hath been otherwise stiled *hush-money*) seem not to have considered the axiom, that a tree which has but just taken root may be removed by a single hand; but let it alone, it will strike so deep, and grow so high, that thousands cannot root it up from its foundation. The head of a spring may be stopped with a very small dam, but when suffered to take its course, encreasing to a larger river, it fills the country, and an army of elephants cannot pass it. It is, therefore,

fore, high time for the London-ministers either to reprobate this connection with administration, or to prove to the treasury, that the gentlemen who receive the 1700*l.* annually without account, however reputable and worthy, as Christians and ministers, are *not the representatives of the body*, in that or any other point."

The reader, it is hoped, need exercise no extravagant degree of candour, to believe, that the preceding detail was entered upon neither to gratify any private malice, nor to oppose any public interest;—that it was neither excited by the arrogance of personal vanity, nor generated by the effervescence of a heated imagination. So far as the Regium Donum influences one body of men, it hath an indirect influence on the community at large: though not the price of blood, it is, like other pensions, the price of liberty, and on that account should receive the most unequivocal disapprobation and the most public animadversion of such as are well-wishers to the political improvement of society. As to myself, I neither know who the present persons are, that distribute, or that receive this royal bounty; and, if I knew them, I might, perhaps, on other accounts, entertain great respect for their characters.

The connection of this affair with Robin-

son's history proceeds from his uniform testimony, in private circles, against this pension, and his actually partaking of it himself, at least, in this particular instance. He has repeatedly declared to many friends, that, in receiving ten pounds from Stennett, he conceived himself indebted to the generosity of private friendship ; that he never thought himself more insulted, than in being ensnared, as it were, to be a witness against himself. For this reason it was, as he himself has declared, that the single note from Stennett was preserved : no receipt, however, for the ten pounds was ever sent ; nor was any reply ever made to the letter.

CHAPTER XVII.

Apparent Change in Robinson's Theological Sentiments ;—Robinson visited by several leading Men of America ;—Hint to Poets.

AT the period, to which this history is now arrived, our author's mind was occupied in multifarious pursuits. By Abraham Atkins, late of Clapham, in Surrey, he was appointed, with Thomas Dunscombe, of Bampton, Oxfordshire, William Wilkins, of Risington, Gloucestershire, and Messrs. Tomkyns, of Abingdon, Berkshire, a trustee under a conveyance of a chapel or meeting-house, in Clapham, and of fundry free-hold and lease-hold houses on the common, in the said parish. This, and other appointments, brought with them additional engagements*.

In

* In the year 1786, he was also appointed, together with Thomas Dunscombe, William Wilkins, and Daniel Turner, of Abingdon, a trustee for the charitable donations of the above Abraham Atkins, conferred by him during his life-time, on the congregations of protestant dissenters undermentioned, viz.—

Kingston Lisle, Berkshire.

Straffield Say, Hampshire and Wiltshire.

R 3

Farringdon,

In the same year, he prepared for publishing a new edition of Saurin's Sermons, which was printed in 1784. It appears, likewise, that a few documents, relative to the history of the Welch baptists, were communicated to the ingenious J. Thomas, of Leominster, author of the history of that people. In mercantile and agricultural pursuits he was, as usual, still occupied. But the undertaking, to which his thoughts were now more particularly directed, was the history of the baptists.

The genius of Robinson was of a nature, that necessarily rendered him the object of suspicion, among such as call themselves *evangelical* preachers, and among many, of envy. Hitherto, however, he had maintained a very respectable character among the dissenters in general; and, as a preacher, had acquired a degree of reputation

Farringdon, Berkshire.

Workingham, ditto.

Buckland, Oxfordshire.

Oxford.

Coate, Oxfordshire.

Burford, ditto.

Longhill, Surrey.

Colnbrook, Buckinghamshire.

Fairford, Gloucestershire.

Cirencester, ditto.

Stratton, St. Margaret's, Wiltshire.

Cambridge.

beyond

beyond any of his orthodox brethren. But the face of things now began to change. Several of his Calvinistical friends were alarmed at his liberality of sentiment, entertained the most serious apprehensions about the purity of his faith,—though no one could impeach the rectitude of his morals; thought he relied too much on his own carnal reason; and made with him, both in person, and by letter, very earnest expostulations. To this they were excited by several among such as call themselves the *serious clergy*.

It must, indeed, be confessed, that about this period, he used to speak concerning the Trinity, not only with a degree of sceptical embarrassment, but with a levity, inconsistent with the character of a sound believer. Towards what he called the scripture Trinity, he carried the exterior professions of respect, but took unreserved liberties with the Trinity in unity.

The cloven foot of heresy then began to make its appearance, and many surveyed it with horror.—One old friend, J. Smith, of London, writes to him about this time, as follows:

“ I believe practical religion always has, and always will, increase or decrease, in proportion as the doctrine of what is called the Trinity,

and others necessarily connected with it, are embraced, or rejected; and, as I view it in this light, I have thought it right, in some few instances, to express my concern, that one whom I have so sincerely respected, should be inclined to pour contempt on any doctrine, that to me seems to enter into the essentials of Christianity."

Robinson, however, long retained the esteem of orthodox, no less than of heterodox believers, though, among some, with considerable abatement of ardour, in proportion to the indeterminate state of his mind on theological points. Yet this fluctuating spirit inclined him not to relinquish too hastily his old friends, though his benevolence always rendered him accessible to new. He resembled a man straitened by a suit of clothes, which seemed no longer to fit him; but which he is unwilling to lay aside. — A person always appears most easy and natural in the last system of tenets, that he adopts, if he adopt them on conviction. So Robinson always thought in estimating the characters of others, but was too indifferent as to what clothes he wore himself.

At this period he seems to have been on more intimate terms with such Socinians, as call themselves unitarians; of which number, indeed,

indeed, were several correspondents already mentioned. With Thomas Fyshe Palmer, that honourable exile, now bearing his faithful testimony to truth at Botany Bay, he became acquainted during his residence in Queen's College, Cambridge; and an affectionate correspondence was carried on between them after his departure. The following extract from a letter, dated, Montrose, May 5, 1784, shews that a most unreserved intercourse had passed between them on religious topics, and the latter part, to some readers, may seem to carry an oblique rebuke.

“ I used to hope that I should learn humility from your lowliness, and now I think I shall learn it from the disgusting manners of
 It is inseparable from them. The religion of Jesus teaches, one would think, a man to divest himself of self; but it teaches to be full of themselves. They seem to be religious only to shew their vanity. I have known write in defence of the unity of God, and of worship being only due to him;—that idolatry consisted in paying religious homage to a wrong object, and that whenever men worshipped any other being than the Deity, they were guilty of this. Vanity has made them circulate this paper, far and wide; and the same vanity has led them every
 Sunday

Sunday to join a genteel congregation in being guilty of this very idolatry they abhorred ; their vanity (for it cannot be zeal) has made them lay such stumbling-blocks in the way of their brethren, that no after repentance will enable them, I fear, to remove."——

It has already been observed, that our author's virtues and talents were held in estimation beyond the limits of his own country.

He received, in 1784, a visit, on which he dwelt with peculiar delight. The following extract from a letter, containing an account of his visitors, and, at the same time, of his rural occupations, shall be here subjoined.

" Chesterton, June 22, 1784.

" What a short-lived thing is reverie ! There sat I, in my own hall, in more than Indian regal rapture—over against me, my wife, making tea—on my right-hand, the honourable speaker of the American house of congress—on my left, the great general Read, second to Washington, in the American army—next to him, an envoy from the states ; and along with us a circle of friends, listening to the honied accents of their tongues, distilling with all the richest and most fragrant sounds of liberty, property, law, commerce, religion, and a future
ture

ture state of perfect and everlasting felicity ;—when in came a well-known, grave, and lovely figure, and addressed me with, “ My dear naughty boy ! ” Full of ideas of dignity, I said with Mungo in the Padlock, “ Naughty boy ! naughty yourself : old massa little tink how great I be ! ” Did I ever forget you ? does a day ever pass without my remembering you ? could not I sit at your feet to receive instruction ?

“ Seriously, my American guests came on Saturday evening,—spent the Lord’s day with us,—departed on Monday afternoon, and left me the choice of the cabin of the Washington, and as much land in the states as I would wish to accept. Happiest of countries ! Peace and prosperity attend you ! I shall never see you ; but if I forget the ability and virtue, that struggled to obtain, and actually did obtain, all that mankind hold dear ; let my right hand forget her cunning.—

“ Pardon this. I return to your letter. My literary matters are at present in the field. I have twenty acres of grass to mow,—an hundred acres of corn to get in at harvest,—fifty acres of fallows ploughing,—ditching,—manuring, and preparing for the next wheat-crop,—beside cattle fat and lean to inspect.

spect. Guess, therefore, whether I can either journey or study, with any degree of prudence, till the fall of the year."

The preceding letter was written to his aged and much respected friend, Daniel Turner, whom he generally addressed in his letters, "honoured father."

In the year 1784, he was engaged in company with Dan Taylor, a respectable minister, among the general baptists*, at the ordination of his friend George Birley, of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, and of James Dore, at Maze-Pond, Southwark. His talents for preaching ordination-sermons had been much admired, and his eloquent, benevolent discourses were received as auspicious circumstances at the settlement of ministers. In Cambridgeshire, and some neighbouring counties, scarcely a single minister was settled, or a place of worship opened for several years, at which Robinson's presence was not solicited, either to preside, to preach, or, at least, to assist in the religious solemnities. But of the ceremony of ordination he now entertained no high opinion, and engaged in the service, merely to gratify his friends, not from any conviction of its importance.

* The general baptists embrace the doctrines of Arminius,—the particular, those of Calvin.

By a letter which our author received, at this period, from his esteemed friend, Dr. Rippon, editor of the Baptist Register, and of a hymn-book, it appears, that one or two hymns in that collection were composed by Robinson. These had appeared before in Dr. Evans's and George Whitfield's hymn-books, and were written by him, when among the methodists; one is well known, and much admired by the methodists, and such as, in contradistinction to the *rational* dissenters, call themselves *evangelical*:—it begins thus,—

Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy praise.
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

There is also a Christmas-hymn in the same strain, which was set to music by his respected friend, Dr. Randall, professor of music in the university of Cambridge.

Of poetry Robinson affected to think meanly, though he read, and even admired Shakespeare, Milton, and Young; and two or three stanzas of the preceding hymns discover something of the *vivida vis animi*, a lively energy of mind, that characterises poetic genius. Indeed, all his prose-writings possess the *σφοδρὸν καὶ ενθουσιαστικὸν πάθος*—that vehement and enthusiastic glow of passion, so essential to poetry, and which,

which, by proper cultivation, might probably have conducted him to some eminence in that sublime art.

When philosophers affect to treat poetry with contempt, they are no less ridiculous, than Grey, when he insulted mathematics, a science, that he had not industry to study, or no desire to comprehend. If, indeed, every rhymester is a poet, poetry is unquestionably a most trifling art; but, if poetry is but philosophy in its most agreeable and elegant attire, then must this incomparable art be approached with a greater portion of respect. The five sources of sublime, marked out in such energetic and glowing language by Longinus*, cannot be better illustrated than by the following passage from a writer, who was no less an orthodox divine, than an ingenious and profound critic. " Since, then, poetry is so venerable both from its antiquity, and its religion, they are no less worthy of rebuke, who treat it as a ridiculous art, and permit none but boys and young persons to pursue it. How unjust this calumny is, may be perceived from the following consideration, that whoever acquires a happy skill in this species of writing, ought not only to excell in the greatest acuteness of genius, in elegance, and splendour

* Longinus, Περὶ Ῥήσεως, sect. viii.

of diction; but to be matured by a most exact judgement, and to be stocked with all the furniture of literature. Indeed, he must turn over the annals of former times, and the monuments of ancient transactions: he must understand the various customs of nations—he must acquire a knowledge of the actions and passions of mankind—he must explore the inward recesses and avenues of the mind—he must survey the frame and structure of the universe—he must, in a word, exhaust all nature. The erudition of Homer, and of Horace, there is no one, who does not perceive and commend. Who does not admire in Virgil, more particularly, every kind of literature; both parts of philosophy, history, geography, and the chief of all the sciences, mathematics? From Lucretius we are sufficiently taught, that natural philosophy and poetry are in perfect harmony; and it is but right, that the same school should be devoted to both*; nor have philosophers, however serious, reason to complain, that one is disgraced by its fellowship with the other†.”

Robinson's correspondents in 1783, 1784, and 1785, besides others already mentioned, were as

* The School of Natural Philosophy, at Oxford.

† *Prælectiones Poeticæ*, in *Schola Naturalis Philosophiæ*, Oxon. habitæ, Auctore Josepho Trapp, A. M. Coll. Wadh. Socio, &c. p. 8.

follows:

follows :—Thomas Mullet, merchant, of Broadstreet ;—R. Hudson, of Wick-house ;—J. Thomas, author of the History of the Welch Baptists ;—Matthew Randall, a son of Dr. Randall, of Cambridge ;—James Dore, pastor of a baptist congregation at Maze-Pond, Southwark ;—J. Smith, of London ;—Job David, a sensible Socinian baptist-preacher of Frome ;—Thomas Fyfe Palmer, B. D. at that time a Socinian preacher, at Montrose, in Scotland * ;—W. Lewes, Stanford ;—W. Evans Bishop, a dissenting minister, at Epping ;—John Rippon, (now Dr.) editor of the Baptist Register, and of a collection of hymns.

* To whose merit I would bear testimony with Gilbert Wakefield, and speak of him, as “ *vir doctus, ingeniosus, et omni laude cumulandus, ideoque barbari homines ac nefarii ad solitudines Novæ Hollandiæ relegarunt :*

——— Sed fidera testes

Intendunt oculos.” SILVA CRITICA, vol. v. p. 45.

A learned, ingenious man, worthy of receiving every praise. Barbarous and nefarious men have, therefore, banished him to the deserts of New Holland.

But e'en the stars are witness to his wrongs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

*Account of some smaller Publications of Robinson's,
and of his Sixteen Discourses published in
1786.*

AT the close of the year 1784, and in 1785, little occurs, that requires a distinct survey. This chapter, therefore, shall take a view of such of our author's smaller works, as have not yet been noticed, and of his sixteen sermons, which, from having been preached in barns and villages near Cambridge, have been called Barn, or Village-Sermons.—These works are :

1. Christianity, a System of Humanity, &c. a Sermon in behalf of the Charity School at Horflydown, Southwark, for the Education and Cloathing of 50 Boys; preached at Salters'-Hall, London, Wednesday, March 3, 1779; published at the request of the Managers. London, Buckland.

2. Christian Submission to Civil Government ; a Discourse preached at Cambridge, January 30, 1780. Cambridge, Hodson.

3. The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies ;
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a Sermon preached at Dr. Fordyce's Meeting, in Monkwel-freet, London, December 25, 1780, to the Society that support the Evening-Lecture there. London, Etherington, 1781. To which is added an Appendix, containing a Criticism on 2 Cor. iv. 3.

4. The General Doctrine of Toleration, applied to the Particular Case of Free Communion, 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson, 1781.

5. The Kingdom of Christ not of this World; a Sermon preached at Broadmead, Bristol, August 28, 1781; being the Day of the Annual Meeting of the Education Society: published at the Request of the Society. Bristol, Pine, 1781.

6. The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures; a Sermon preached at Salters'-Hall, London, on Wednesday, September 11, 1782, in behalf of the Bible Society. London, Lepard, 1782.

7. Sixteen Discourses on several Texts of Scripture; addressed to Christian Assemblies in Villages near Cambridge: to which are added six Morning-Exercises, 8vo. pp. 436. London, Dilly.

8. A Discourse preached at the Ordination
of

of the Reverend James Dore, at Maze-Pond, Southwark.

9. A Discourse delivered at the Ordination of the Reverend George Birley, St. Ives, Hunts.

10. An Essay on Liberality of Sentiment, published, with some alterations by the editor, Charles De Coetlogon, in the first number of the Theological Magazine.

11. Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity; a Sermon preached at Cambridge, February 10, 1788. Bowtell, Cambridge; and Dilly, London.

12. A Sermon on Sacramental Tests, preached at Cambridge, November 5, 1789. To which is subjoined an Essay on the Slave Trade. Cambridge.

13. A Plan of a Charity School, for the Education of the Boys and Girls of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge.

These smaller works are, in general, written with elegance of style, and with strength of sentiment; they are methodical in their arrangement, though method frequently is interrupted by the sallies of a lively imagination,

and sprightly addressee to the hearers. But they all keep one leading object principally in view, and preserve an unity of design. In a few instances, simplicity of expression is broken in upon by a coarseness, which is said not properly to belong to the pulpit: and the arguments are often weakened by a too frequent application to the hearers: the poetical parts of the scriptures are with great dexterity so interwoven into the author's remarks, as to spread over them a peculiar brightness; but this use of the eastern metaphors is, sometimes, too general and extemporaneous; and the author does not always succeed when he attempts criticism.

The leading excellencies of these sermons are, love of liberty—zeal for the dissenters—a desire to promote the intellectual improvement of his hearers, and to guard them against such extravagancies as they observed in other communities. Two extracts we subjoin: the first shall be from a sermon entitled “Christianity, a System of Humanity,” a sermon preached in behalf of the protestant-dissenters’ charity-school, at Horselydown, Southwark.

“Your ancestors, gentlemen, the old puritans, whose successors since have been called nonconformists, and, of late days, protestant-dissenters, were a noble race of men. I am sorry to say, few of our historians have done them justice:

justice: the most have written partially. These venal scribblers may be put into two classes: the first wilfully drop, or carelessly lose them; the last misrepresent and reproach them. We ask, "What evil have they done? Were they ignorant and illiterate?" Neither. Read their voluminous works, and see. He must have a bold front, who dares charge them with want of literature. If they were equal to their contemporaries, justice is their due; if they excelled them, they have a right to honour; had they fallen short of others, they had been objects of pity; but, Where would have been the crime? Were they enemies to piety? Alas! their zealous attachment to this was their sin, and procured from their adversaries the nickname, puritan. Were they prone to sedition?—Sedition!—why, they of all men had the best notions of civil government, and yielded an uniform obedience to it. Whence, then, the partial treatment of which we complain?—My brethren, these men were stern assertors of the civil and religious rights of mankind; they entered into the genius of the present British civil constitution (the civil constitution, I say) before it was brought to its present maturity: and along with that their history is incorporated. When our former princes strove to render themselves despotic, they declared against the tyranny, openly avowed that arbitrary government was unconstitutional,

tional, and that, for their parts, they would be free. The will of God revealed in the scripture, was their religion,—and the nation's happiness, their civil law. From this line they never departed, no, not all the time the race of Stuart intrigued, plundered, and slew. This school was one of their latest efforts, and for this they were struggling, when the last spark of that direful house went out.

“ Let it not shock you, that they were persecuted. Men, who distinguish between a constitution, and the guardians and administrators of it, who adhere to the first, which never varies, and are subject to the last, who often change,—such men, being inconvertible, are sometimes in fashion, and at other times antique. When the constitution flourishes, they are in reputation—when that decays, they sink along with it into honourable neglect or disgrace; and this is the case of all, even noble families, who are firm to the constitution.”

The other extract is from a sermon preached at Broadmead, Bristol, on the day of the annual meeting of the Education-Society, now under the direction of Dr. Ryland.

“ Suffer me, more particularly, young gentlemen, to exhort you to attend to this part of
our

our subject. Never affect the dignity of priesthood; ever despise the misery of priestcraft; never affect show and parade in religion. The little excrescences of pride, the paltry exhibitions in protestant churches, are reflections on the sense of those who import them; for they are imported from Italy. Pardon me a homely comparison; and, if it be wrong to expose superstition to contempt, forgive me, at least for once, this wrong. Really, when I compare the little cheap decorations of reformed churches, with the master-pieces of Italy, our gaudy days, with their grand processions, our beggarly imitations of their pontifical magnificence; I call theirs pomp, ours poverty—they are nature in the theatre of the metropolis—we are strollers, uttering bombast in cast-off finery, in a booth at a fair. Prayer, baptism, the Lord's supper, explaining a truth, enforcing a duty,—do these simple exercises, divine in their origin, manly in their performance, and effectual in producing all the ends, for which they were instituted; do they require the despicable shreds of papal trumpery to engage mankind to practise them? “My kingdom is not of this world.”

“Our Lord said truly to Pilate, “if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.” Yes! most adorable Redeemer! if thy kingdom required splendour, thy ser-

vants have such an high veneration for thee, they would expend all, they would spend and be spent in thy service. Nature and art in rich profusion, the architecture of Greece, and the music of Italy, statues, vases, pictures, habits, the treasures of the East, and the refinements of the West, the spices of Arabia, the cabinets of antiquaries, the jewels of princes, the luxurious pomp of the most magnificent monarchs, should adorn thy palace, and enrich thy throne—but—thy kingdom is not this world.”

Of the object of the Village or Barn-Sermons, the reader may form some opinion from the following extract from the preface.

“ The protestant-dissenting congregations at Cambridge, from the first forming of them, have always consisted, besides inhabitants of the town, of a great number of families, resident in the adjacent villages. In these last families, there have always been children and servants, aged and infirm persons, who could attend the public worship in town only occasionally, some once a month, on the lord's-supper-day, others once a quarter, and the very aged only once or twice in the summer. It hath, therefore, been the constant practice of their teachers, in compliance with their own desire, to instruct them at their own towns
about

about once a month. In some there are houses fitted up on purpose ; and in others, barns, in summer, when they are empty, and, in winter, dwelling-houses answer the same end : when either have been too small to accommodate the auditors, as they often have been on fine evenings, the preachers have stood abroad in an orchard or a paddock, or any convenient place. The following discourses are a few of many which have been delivered in such places. They are printed, as nearly as can be recollected, as they were spoken.

“ In some places, and in some seasons, the teacher hath tarried all night, and half an hour early in the morning hath been employed in devotion, and giving instruction. The short discourses, called for distinction sake, Exercises, were delivered at such times. It was usual, too, before sermon in the evening, to catechise the children, by hearing them read a short scripture-history, and questioning them about the sense of it.”—The sermons are on the following subjects.

Discourse I. The Christian religion easy to be understood : delivered at Dry-Drayton.—
 Discourse II. Almighty God is the lovely Father of all Mankind : at Granchester.—Discourse
 III. We ought to be content with Providence : at Hauxton.—Discourse IV. The scripture is a
 good

good Book written by Divine inspiration: at Sawston.—Discourse V. Jesus Christ is the principal person mentioned in Scripture: at Fulbourne.—Discourse VI. The merit of Jesus Christ distinguishes him from all other Persons: at Ickleton.—Discourse VII. Jesus Christ is the most excellent of all teachers: at Stapleford.—Discourse VIII. The death of Jesus Christ obtained the remission of sins: Harston.—Discourse IX. Jesus Christ is the Governor of his disciples: at Whittlesford, before a Public Baptism.—Discourse X. The Christian religion should not be confounded with Heathenism: at Little Shelford.—Discourse XI. The Christian religion should not be mixed with that of the Jews: at Fenstanton.—Discourse XII. Christians should behave properly to such as give confused accounts about Religion: at Fulbourne.—Discourse XIII. The spirit of God guides all good men: at Fulbourne.—Discourse XIV. Faith and holiness are inseparable: at Chesterford.—Discourse XV. Incurrible sinners will be without excuse at the last day: at Foxon.—Discourse XVI. Any person, who understands Christianity, may teach it: at Wickham,

The morning exercises are on the following topics. I. Industry: delivered at St. Ives. II. Caution: at Great Eversham. III. Frugality: at Hauxton.—IV. Covetousness: at Hauxton,
—V. Self=

—V. Self-preservation: at Fulbourne.—VI. The Jews: at Wickham Brook.

These Sermons and Exercises are by no means of the common cast: whether they possess more merit, or less, than the generality of such compositions, will be determined differently by different persons. They certainly all discover a strain peculiar to the preacher, little of that systematic strictness, adopted by the orthodox dissenters, or of that formal air of moralising, characteristic of the episcopal clergy. Yet the spirit of the dissenter, and a dignity of principle pervade the whole, and you every where meet with fervid zeal in the cause of liberty, determined hostility to religious establishments, an attachment to the interests of non-conformists, and a desire to dissolve by warm and tender affections, the angry and discordant believer. The style is simple, and the more animated passages flow with that unstudied, yet powerful eloquence, peculiar to a man of fancy, when borne along the stream of popular admiration, and supported by energetic affections. Such discourses, however, after all, derive much of their value from the manner of delivering them, and our author's was universally allowed to be original: that every description of readers will be gratified by their perusal, is by no means asserted; by some they may

may, perhaps, be reckoned too political, by others not sufficiently experimental; and by others not decided as to doctrines, or explicit as to sentiments: but whoever can admire the brilliant fallies of fancy, or be gratified by the display of amiable and benevolent manners, by the studious condescension of a great man labouring to popularise his ideas, cannot fail to receive great entertainment, whatever conclusions he may draw concerning the character of the preacher, or the temper of his doctrine. “Cedet uti conviva fatur,” he will go away satisfied and replenished with his feast,” and, whether orthodox or heterodox, may apply to these discourses what Plutarch says of certain poets, “their contradictory assertions, by destroying their credibility, do not throw sufficient weight into either scale to do injury*.”

One circumstance will not fail to strike an attentive reader of the Sermons, and Morning-Exercises: they had been delivered several years back, during the author's more immediate connection with the Calvinistical party: he must, consequently, have preserved notes: a kind of awkward and spurious orthodoxy distinguishes them—such sentiments and language

* *Ἄι δὲ τῶν ποιητῶν ὑπεναντιώσεις πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀνταφείρουσαι τὴν πίστιν, οὐκ ἔσιν ἰσχυρὰν ῥοπήν γενέσθαι πρὸς τὸ ἑλπίεν. Plutarch. de audiendis Poetis.*

as even Calvinists might think savoury meat, and such as heretics could sit down to with pleasure: sometimes the preacher talks like a child of grace; at others so much like the pupil of nature, that some have scarcely considered him a believer*: in short, these sermons exhibit what many of our author's works exhibit, a man attempting to reconcile incongruities, and to perform impossibilities: setting off, at one time, like an orthodox man, and ending like an heretic, or setting off like an heretic, and ending like an orthodox man: a Calvinist and Socinian might unite in saying of them what the ingenious author of the *Indian Cottage* says of Error: "I cannot better compare it, than to the glare of a fire which destroys the dwellings, that it enlightens†."—But though the preacher, often trifles; the philanthropist more frequently charms: though you may not always understand his creed, you cannot fail to be caught by his benevolence; and in the man you lose sight of the divine.

* See particularly the Sermon, entitled the "Christian Religion easy to be understood," and compare it with the Confession of the Savoyard curate in Rousseau's *Emilius*.

† L'erreur au contraire est l'ouvrage de l'homme: elle est toujours un mal: c'est une fausse lumière qui luit pour nous égarer; je ne puis mieux la comparer qu'à la lueur d'un incendie qui dévore les habitations qu'elle éclaire. *La Chaumière Indienne* par Jacques-Bernardin-Henri de St. Pierre.

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The following letter, written by Robinson, to an esteemed friend, shall close this chapter: it will explain the particular course, and the severity, of his studies, in 1786: and will be connected with the subsequent account of his elaborate researches into ecclesiastical history.

“ Chesterton, September 28, 1786.

“ HONOURED SIR,

“For once I shall have the pleasure of answering your favour directly. We deliver in all our books at every quarter-day*. I don’t choose to send my large lot in the crowd, so mine went yesterday, and your letter came back. To morrow my docketts are to be returned, and on Saturday I set off again with new ones. Meantime I strike out my next draft, which is Italy, and prepare for my winter campaign. I find, there are ample materials in the two sets of Muratori: the first is his *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores varii in unum collecti corpus*, contained in 28 volumes folio. The second is his *Antiquitates Italicae Medii Ævi*, 6 volumes folio. I have made great use of these in my preliminary essays, and I saw then what they would do in my history. His *Thesaurus Inscriptionum*, 4 vols. folio, is useful, and so is his *Anecdota Ecclesiastica*, and his *Anecdota Græca*. He is an invaluable collector of authentick monuments. I have two ordinations

* Viz. to the Public Library, Cambridge.

to attend in October, one of a general baptist in St. Ives, Huntingdon; the other of a particular baptist at Biggleswade, Bedford. Then I go to supply one lord's day a destitute neighbouring church, and I fear I must run up to town for a day or two with my youngest son, who is going in a trading vessel to Smyrna, just to see him aboard. I foresee no more winter interruptions.

“The Russian church comes up three times in my plan. Once in the preliminaries, to authenticate the *fact* of their dipping, for trine immersion is, and ever was their practice. This is established from the old Greek menologies collected by Izanphurnaris, Goar, Habert, and others: as also from their councils, comments, &c. Modern travellers ascertain the fact now, as Gordon, Dr. King, and many more. The present empress is an anabaptist, or, to speak more properly, she was sprinkled in her infancy, when she was princess of Anhalt Zerbst, and dipt when she married the Czar Peter, and took the name of Catharine Alexiefna.

“Russia comes up a second time in the history of Greece. I have divided this into three periods. The first is from the beginning to the removal of the seat of empire to Byzantium, during which, the church was not established,
and

and the earlier Greek fathers flourished. Here is no shadow of infant-baptism. The second reaches from the erection of the eastern empire to its destruction by the Turks. This is properly the Byzantine history. The Byzantine history consists of 36 folios of the princess Anna Comnena, Zonaras, Glycas, Ducas, Acropolita, Cantacuzen, Procopius, Bryennius Cæsar, and others. There is in this library a magnificent set of these writers, and I have taken the history from them. Here the history of baptism divides itself. In the establishment there is dipping and infants: among the dissenters single and trine immersion, but no infants. I think I have proved, contrary to the opinion of Dr. Priestley, that the Eunomians dipped, and dipped only adults. I think an anecdote in the *Avendolia* of Procopius puts it out of doubt. It is the history of a young officer, the son of an Eunomian, who conformed to the Greek church, in the reign of Justinian. The last period reaches from the conquest of Constantinople to the present time. Here, under the patriarchates, comes up Russia. Here is dipping (trine immersion) and infants.

“ Russia appears a third time in the history of Lithuania in Poland. This was a species of Greeks called Rutheni, who coalesced with the catholicks. Prince Ostrog, palatine of

Kiow, who was of this kind of Greeks, patronised the unitarian baptists on his estates at Lubastow, Ostropolis, and other places, and actually built them a place of worship at Constantow; and in all these parts, and through Red Russia they flourished; and governor Gabriel Hoyiski, lord Lieniuta, the sons of judge Czapliski, and many others, were of their churches, both patrons and members. Jerom of Prague, the Taborites and Calixtines of Bohemia, the disciples of Hufs, from whom came the Moravian baptists, and the Transylvanian churches, who were the offspring of the Poles, had all some connections near or remote with the Greek church. Dipping was common to both parties, though the Bohemian baptists poured. My account of Poland, Transylvania, and Bohemia are all written. They must be revised, and they fall into the second volume. My sketch of Greece consists of about eighty pages of such paper as this letter. Perhaps I may throw in a few more; and perhaps I may scratch out, when I sit down seriously to revise for the press.

“ In regard to Signor Valdesso, I have seen his considerations in English. I do not think them of any great consequence, and I hope you will not give yourself much trouble about the original. Hitherto I have made it a law to

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trust

trust nothing but original authentic monuments, for I have observed some foul play in translations and quotations. I have Bayle. I have tucked Valdeffo into Navarre, and if I find any thing in Italian monuments, as probably I may, (and indeed I think I have met with him either in Muratori or Montfaucon) I shall put him in his proper place, Naples.

“ On overlooking the above, I fear I wrote it before I was well awake. The clock struck three, when I dipped the first pen. While my kettle boiled I wrote. Now that I have breakfasted, and have tasted “the nutritive aid of the beloved pipe,” my brains are brightened, and I return to the charge, perceiving I had forgotten two things. First Regenvolscius,—I thank you for the information. He was of the Unitas Fratrum. His book is a small quarto, full of authentic information. I have made great use of him in Poland, to which, and to the Greek-catholics of Lublin, his accounts chiefly belong. He was also of great use to me in Bohemia. He gives authentic lists of Taborite and Calixtine ministers, and throws great light on the disputes between archbishop Rokyzan, and Nicholas Peldrimouski. Thence came the Moravian baptists. Poplinerius, Stranski, Dubrauski, Æneas Sylvius, Toppeltinus, the acts of prince Racokiki, Esterhazi, Isthuansi, and
many

many more fall in well with Regenvolscius ; but he contains more original information of that spot, in Lithuania, than they all. A more valuable book, and a far more scarce, is a small piece written by Lubienieski. I had despaired of finding him, when, lo, a gentleman of Trinity-college found him in a blind corner of that library. I fear I shortened my lecture the night I got hold of him, through impatience to read him. Dubrouski I procured from Queen's-college library.

“My next omission regards Italy. I spoke of Muratori. I ought to have said, that I had finished the first period, and that, instead of authentic history, I had been forced to prove that the Latin church had no authentic historians of their first period ; but had filled up the chasm with legends of the ninth and tenth centuries. What parcels of martyrologies, menologies, metaphrastai or life writers, have I been forced to turn over ! It pleases me to find, that even this generation of liars had not the courage to put infant-baptism into their histories of Saint Agathas, Saint Felicitates, and other such trash. On the contrary, baptisteries, adults, confessions of faith, and so on, appear every where. Nine volumes of Ughelli's *Italia Sacra*, three of Rocchi Pirri's *Sicilia Sacra*, four of Ripamonti's *Milan*, one of Bernard de Rubei's *de Ecclesia Aquileiensis*, and

others of this sort, have been of great use to me. Adults and baptisteries without end. My best book here has been a modern work of Paciaudi, and his description of the cabinet of the late pope Benedict (XIV. I think) who was a mild, learned, curious antiquary. They laugh at such as pretend that baptism was administered by sprinkling for the first eight or ten centuries. Paul Maria Paciaudi published his *Christian Antiquities at Rome* under the auspices of Benedict XIV. in 1759. The pope assisted and inspected the work. He was a great lover of antiquities, and Paciaudi had access to seals, rings, coins, cups, vases, habits, monumental inscriptions, manuscripts, &c. all of the pope's private cabinet. Speaking of an antique mosaic work in the baptistery of Ravenna, in which the artist hath represented John pouring water on Jesus, he exclaims thus—"Præcurfor vasculo aquam in caput Christi effundit. At quæ *monstra* nuntiant ejusmodi emblemata! Numquid Christus Dominus *adspersione* baptizatus? Tantum abest a vero, ut nihil magis *vero* possit esse contrarium: sed errori et inscientiæ pictorum tribuendum, qui quum historiarum sæpe sint ignari, vel quia quidlibet audendi potestatem sibi factam credunt, res, quas effingunt, mirifice aliquando depravant." By a variety of ancient Etruscan monuments, taken from the Museum Florentinum, and other such works of Gori, Kircher, Bonanni, Salvini,

and others, I think, I have demonstrated that infant-sprinkling is not Christian baptism but pagan lustration, and was in use long before either Jesus or Moses, so that if they aspire at antiquity, here they have it,—an antiquity which we dippers do not boast of, or envy. I trouble you with all this for the sake of your advice on the propriety of my plan, the worth of my materials, and the names of authors, which may have escaped my notice, and fallen under yours. I sit before you as before my father, and I have not opened my matters to any but yourself in this ample manner. You may guess my reason.

“Muratori, then, belongs to the middle ages, during the kingdom of Italy, first under the Lombards, then under Charlemagne and his successors: including also the Exarchate of Ravenna. I know already that there was no sprinkling in Italy during this period. Baptisteries there were, and some yet remain. This is the inscription on one;

DOMINA NOSTRA FLAVIA THEVDOLINDA
AEDIFICARE FECIT HOC BAPTISTERIVM
VIVENTE DOMINO NOSTRO AGILVPHO.

“Moreover, the Lombard laws prove that *Infans* stood for a minor, an infant in *law*, not a

natural infant, and so it did among all, Greeks, Romans, Goths, Franks, &c. The cause of infant-baptism diminishes in proof every day in my eyes, and I am ever finding something, which seems as if it were written on purpose to produce this effect. I pitch foot with father Mabillon, and affirm it did not appear in the West till the fifth century: and that impudent debauchee, Saint Augustine, who was baptised along with his bastard Alypius, by Ambrose at Milan, himself a middle-aged man, and the boy about sixteen,—that Austin, who kept a mistress while he was preparing for baptism, and writing books to defend Christianity,—that was the man, who invented original sin, and baptism to wash it away, and told a lie to support it by calling it an apostolical tradition, when he, who was the son of a Christian woman, had not been baptised in infancy himself. I look upon him to have been a true Carthaginian, and one of the best examples of Punic faith that ever lived.”

This letter was written to Daniel Turner; and though some of our readers, probably, may exclaim, “How great the labour, yet how trifling the pursuit!” others may receive from it much useful instruction.

CHAPTER XIX.

Robinson's Disagreements with the Orthodox.

THERE exists, according to an ingenious writer, a respectable, as well as a spurious orthodoxy. The latter he thus defines: "It is the overflowing of zeal without knowledge; which is not contented with men's professing the same faith, but would force them to defend it by all and singular the arguments, whether weak or strong, and all the texts, whether spurious or genuine, that have ever been employed in its defence: which, whenever a rotten and ruinous outwork of religion is demolished, utters as hideous a shriek, as if the very foundations of the building were shaken, and the church of Christ nodded to her fall*."

In asserting, in the preceding chapter, that a spurious orthodoxy pervades *Robinson's Barn-Sermons*, all intended was this, that amidst much simplicity of sentiment, ingenuity of explication, and ardour of expression, observations occasionally occur, scarcely recon-

* "Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis, in answer to his Defence of the Three Heavenly Witnesses, 1 John v. 7," by R. Porson. Preface p. 26. 27.

oilable with very flavoury tenets, such, at least, as are agreeable to the taste of the generality of churches, such, for which Robinson himself retained a considerable relish, while seeking after different food.

In another point of view, these discourses are most respectably orthodox : and, probably, some of Robinson's friends may consider the following observations on them more accurate, than such as have already been given. They are extracted from a letter to our author from W. C. Unwin*, a sensible orthodox clergyman, of the established church, who, while at college, was an intimate acquaintance of Robinson's.

“ There are,” says he, “ some few things in the sermons, *that I cannot understand, and believe them to be printed wrong.* I had marked them, but lost the paper, or *would freely have communicated my remarks.* I found very many more, that I hope never to forget ! You seem to me to have fulfilled the prophecy, that, “ to the poor the gospel shall be preached,” before

* W. C. Unwin was a student, and, if I mistake not, afterwards, a fellow of Christ-College, Cambridge. He became tutor to the children of Cowper, the ingenious author of the Task. One of Cowper's poems is addressed to Unwin.

any man now living, for you lay it bare in its naked simplicity, which I have long thought the "one thing needful" in the preaching of some good people."

But Robinson's orthodoxy was certainly not very high seasoned, and many persons of true orthodox *gout* fell out with the cook.

Respecting his disagreements with some of his Calvinistical friends, a few hints have already been dropped. The process of his mind, however, in its successive changes of religious sentiments, it is unnecessary to trace; and, as it would perhaps be impossible to discover, it would be ridiculous to pursue: we should have not only to mark out the boundaries between faith and reason; and to distinguish the vagaries of enthusiasm, from the deliberations of judgement; but to marshal, as it were, and to put in order the fallies of an imagination, not a little extravagant; to draw fixed conclusions from concessions by no means permanent, and to keep to a determined point a mind, inconstant from principle, and wavering from choice; which, if not influenced by the prejudices of opinion, was exceedingly biassed by the softness of friendship, and the weakness of affection: we should, in a word, bring ourselves into a state of ridiculous responsibility, and expose ourselves

selves to the hazard of a fortuitous contradiction.—Superior genius, and extreme precision are frequently like two parallel lines, that move in opposite directions, and never meet.

That a considerable change actually took place in Robinson's mind, on theological tenets, long before he published his history, there can be no doubt: though the feelings of his heart, on this occasion, may be more easily traced, than the order of his reflections: quotations from letters to confidential friends will explain these: and a few candid observations shall follow, in order to do justice to all the circumstances of the case, and, as much as may be, to qualify mutual asperities: for though, like uncle Toby, a man may be willing to travel many a mile in quest of truth, like the same honest man, he may be willing to trudge as many more to avoid a quarrel.

Ye sons of candour and of moderation, whether, like Pythagoras, ye discard the pride of the sophist, and assume the more modest appellation of philosopher: whether, like Socrates, ye estimate speculative wisdom only in proportion to its utility, professing "to know but this, that ye know nothing†;" or, like Plato, soaring beyond sensible objects, ye are engag-

* Xenophon. Memorab. l. iv.

ed in the contemplation of ideas, and of infinite mind* ; or whether ye embrace the religion of Jesus, professing to " love one another as brethren ;" or, like the poor Indian outcast, are content to follow simple nature, and, comparing truth to the dew of heaven, wish to preserve it pure, by collecting it in the pure vessel of an honest heart†,—to whatever school ye belong, and whatever tenets ye profess, bear testimony against the man who breathes the language of bigotry: distinguish the domineering insolence of pedantry, from the modest tone of an inquirer, and the cordiality of a believer from the manœuvrings of politicians, and hypocrites,

The memoirs of a speculative man are the history of intellect ; and in such a narrative, the shifting views of inquiry, the motley scenes of religious party, necessarily fall under survey. Were these subjects entirely omitted, the history might proceed more agreeably ; but, would there not still remain a wide gap ? Would not the reflections that arise, be less useful and pertinent ? Ye admirers of John Calvin, take these remarks with you : ye shall be left in the undisturbed possession of your creed : not a sin-

* Platon. Parmenides.

† A paria : see la Chaumière Indienne,

gle article of your faith shall be impugned : but while I follow the line of my duty, charge me not with malevolence.

The letters, and extracts from letters, that shall be laid before the reader, were written at different periods ; but all between the years 1786, and 1790 ; and all are connected with the same subject.

The following passage is copied from a letter to a dissenting minister of great benevolence, and moderately orthodox.

“ I have been seven weeks in London : my own party treated me with neglect, and even preached against me in my presence, about mental error, which, “ ita Dii me ament,” not a soul of them understands. I preached, however, for the general baptists, and for Drs. Rees, Kippis, Price, Worthington, &c*. So

* These respectable persons, together with Thomas Morgan another sensible dissenting minister, and, I think, Polhill, late member for the borough, went to hear Robinson give a lecture some time prior to this period, when he preached among the Calvinists : they all agreed to borrow Price’s expression, “ that he was the finest colloquial preacher they ever heard.”—It will afford our readers pleasure to be informed, that the Life of Dr. Price will be shortly laid before the public, written by his nephew, George Charles Morgan, an ingenious and well-informed man, author of Lectures on Electricity,

that

that now the slandering orthodox name me an Arian and Socinian, with apparent grace. They are a bitter, mischievous generation, and many of the most zealous are immoral and dishonest: stuffed ready to burst with faith, they have no room for virtue."—This letter was evidently written under great irritation of mind.

In the following letter, more patience is exercised towards persons, but great severity is directed against their systems.

" Chesterton, January 10, 1788.

" DEAR SIR,

" For once you shall not have cause to complain of my delaying to write. If wrote that letter which I received from Abingdon, I would advise him never to defend Calvinism again, for he himself is one of the best and strongest arguments against it that ever I met with. Our chief objection against Calvinism, is the sourness of it. Even poor small beer is preserved till it acquires acidity, and then all reason for the preservation of it ceases. I consider as one of the best-natured men in London; but if Calvinism can spoil such a temper as his, it is a violent presumption against it. See now; his natural temper is good, but his system teaches him, " No, your nature is wicked,

ed, altogether wicked." His manners are mild, gentle, benevolent ; but his system teaches him it is a sin to treat erroneous people with benevolence, for there is a damning guilt in error, and he who doth not resist it, is not found in the faith ; and if he is unsound, down he goes, chuck into the devil's jaws, who champs him as crows do a fresh bone.— If such a temper ass can be so metamorphosed, as to throw about firebrands, arrows, and death, for the comfort of idiots, the torment of infidels, and the glory of God, what have we to expect from the tempers of men who are naturally savage?"

The person alluded to in the following letter, has distinguished himself in America and England, by preaching and writing on the doctrine of future punishment. His opinion is that, which was maintained by the late David Hartley *, and has since found an advocate in Dr. Priestley. He maintains, that future punishment is not endless, and that the torture of the damned will finally work their conversion. He visited Robinson at Chesterton, and his visit revived our author's disgust against the orthodox, which he thus expresses in a letter to a friend †.

“ Mr.

* See Hartley's Observations on Man.

† I cannot pass by a joke of Robinson's, when Winchester

“Mr. Winchester has been here and preached. I did not hear him. The preach and print against him. They pretend that God is of their temper, and will not bate a day of eternity. They never knew what criticism was, and they do nothing but chaunt *for ever, and for ever*. Poor honies! servants who know not what their lord doth! Tell one of them, “There are twenty-five millions in France, and there is not one among them like you. Are all these doomed by their own father to endless and unavoidable woe?” They answer gravely, “Yes.” Ask, what sort of a father this is? They are never shocked; they never blush; but affirm, “this is wise, and just, and kind; and it will be more glorious to God, to save me, and damn them, than it would be to share eternal life amongst us: and we few, though we hate one another here, shall be the happier for the damnation of the rest.” Barbarians! What arrogant madness inspires you? Are you the excellent of the earth? “O! my soul, come not thou into their assembly; to such, mine honour, be not thou united. Cursed be their anger, for it is cruel!”

chester was first introduced to him. “What!” said he, “are you the man, who think that God Almighty will burn the old tobacco pipes, till they become white again?” —He gave him the right hand of fellowship.

The

The following letter is added, not as applicable to the present case, for it was written on another occasion, but as explanatory of circumstances incident to Robinson's situation; and as containing considerable humour: it was written to Thomas Dunscombe, a worthy dissenting minister, before mentioned.

“ It is really deplorable to see the condition of some of these churches; some sapling of a minister collects and embodies weaklings, like himself; a sort of insipid chit-chat is made the test of a Christian; and as men of sense will not disgrace their understandings by chaunting such stuff, they are left. Not one of these church-babies foresees that in human societies, human frailties must produce disagreeables; not one, therefore, is prepared to meet such things, but in the moment of a difference, void of all prudence, moderation, or decency, out they set a crying, scaring themselves, and bellowing up the multitude, as if the world were at an end: when nothing is the matter, only Billy the baby has broken Billy the baby's doll. It is impossible in the nature of things, that in our churches any thing can happen of consequence enough to justify such violent dealings as are often seen. Nobody's life is endangered here; nobody's property is disposed of without his consent; nobody is compelled
to

to attend. In short they are our unruly passions, that give church disputes all their consequence ; and if they were bridled, no harm could happen. If a dispute is too much for contending parties, Why do they not submit it to the arbitration of men cooler than themselves? I think nothing can excuse such monstrous conduct as posting up papers about church disputes, upon market crosses. Zeal, frantic zeal, what infinite mischief it does!

“I have disposed of this summer, in repairing and painting my house, in receiving company, and in a month’s retirement ; and I have made one observation: I never had so much company successively, in so short a time, in my life—and I have remarked only a few of the many ministers, who are sincerely studying the New Testament, the four gospels, I mean. I want a man who vindicates the book, and ascertains the fact, that the history of the incarnation is not an addition, and this by sober, just criticism. I do not want authorities of great names. I want reasons to convince my understanding. I want one who gives me the genuine doctrine of the four gospels, before the epistles were written, a man as familiar with Palestine, as his own country ; with Herod, John, and others of that day, as with George III. and Pitt, and Fox. I do not want a quoter of texts, and a packer of

ecclesiastical news. I want a good sound logician, who knows how to reason, and who is no novice, a cool, deliberate, honest disciple of Jesus, who pauses, and weighs, and admits the refining fire of inquiry to burn freely. Ah! my friend! what a falling off is here! Instead of possessing treasures of wisdom and knowledge, alas! we are asked one question, and we gape like dying rooks: and yet we are set for the defence of the gospel, and the Lord, even Jehovah himself, is wonderfully with us. As for mere squirrels, that jump, and frisk, and crack nuts, they divert me, for in my eye their idiotism is the seal of their salvation. But I hate your Cat-o'-mountains that hiss and scratch out harmless people's eyes. Brother, let us not be mischievous by our tempers; let us not be Jack-nobodies by our idleness, and inactivity. Let us begin to study at the feet of the quiet and mild master, and in patience let us, as he hath taught us, possess our souls. Peace be with you. Love to all, except Miss Duncombe: here is not room enough to hold my expressions of esteem for her.

" Yours ever,

" R. ROBINSON."

From the preceding letters, it appears, that, at the present period, Robinson's sentiments concerning

concerning the system of Calvin were materially changed ; it appears, likewise, that his opinion of the men who professed it, had undergone alterations. Thus he speaks of the Calvinist-preachers among the dissenters, in the year 1779—Could he mean to exclude his own party ?

“ Among these, the English protestant-dissenters stand first in merit ; and as their congregations are constitutionally in possession of Christian liberty, they have produced some of the greatest preachers in the world. It would be easy to give a long list of names from the dawn of the reformation to this day ; but I sacrifice the pleasure of doing so to the modesty of my friends. This, however, I will venture to say, and no man shall stop me of this boasting, we have now in our churches exact copies of our ancient models. The prophets, do they live for ever ? Yes, they do ! The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha ! “The grave solidity of Cartwright, and Jacob, seemed to reside in Owen, and Goodwin, and Gill.—The vivacity of Watts, and Bradbury, and Earle, lives in others, whom I dare not name. The patient laborious Fox,—the silver Bates,—the melting Baxter,—the piercing Mead,—the generous Williams,—the instructive Henry,—the soft and candid Doddridge,—Ridgley,—

and Gale,—and Bunyan,—and Burgeſs, in all their variegated beauties, yet flouriſh in our pulpits, exerciſing their different talents for mutual edification. We have Barnabas, the ſon of conſolation, and Boanerges the thunderer, ſtill. Ye ſervants of the moſt high God, who ſhew unto us the way of ſalvation; peace be within the walls of your churches, and proſperity within your dwelling-houſes!—You have no *palaces*, you need none, palaces can add nothing to you *.”

The ſyſtem of Calvin ſhall ſhift for itſelf: on the parties referred to by Robinſon, in his ſevere animadverſions, a remark or two ſhall follow.

All religious ſocieties, doubtleſs, have among them immoral characters and ſolemn dunces. Thoſe, at the head of which, Robinſon for ſome time flouriſhed, will, among others, come in for their portion. Who will ſay, that all, who teach others, poſſeſs knowledge, and, that all who profeſs godlineſs, are ſaints?

Befides, from people deriving no advantage from our public inſtitutions, and whoſe miniſters frequently receive not the benefit even of their own, our expectations muſt not be too fan-

* Claude's Eſſay, vol. ii. Brief Diſſertation on preaching the Word, p. 64. 65.

guine. Great liberality of mind must not be generally looked for, where a man's future hopes are all made to cling about five points of doctrine: among men, trembling frequently between the points of extreme depravity, and of extraordinary sanctity, will frequently be discovered characters bigoted, unnatural, artificial, hypocritical. Jonathan Edwards, a writer much admired by the Calvinists, has well observed, "It is with professors of religion, especially such as become so in time of the out-pouring of the spirit of God, as it is with the blossoms in the spring; there are vast numbers of them upon the trees, which all look fair and promising; but yet very many of them never come to any thing; and many of those, that, in a little time, wither up, and drop off, and rot under the trees, yet, for a while, look as beautiful and gay as others; and not only so, but smell sweet, and send forth a pleasant odour, so that we cannot, by any of our senses, certainly distinguish those blossoms, which have in them that secret virtue which will afterwards appear in the fruit, and that inward solidity and strength, which shall enable them to bear, and cause them to be perfected by the hot summer-sun, that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the beautiful colours and smell of the blossom, that we must judge by. So new con-

verts (professedly so), in their talk about things of religion, may appear fair, and be very favourable, and the saints may think they talk feelingly; they may relish their talk, and imagine they perceive a divine favour in it; and yet all may come to nothing*."

At the same time, among the Calvinists many are found, who deserve commendation for their sincerity: and their zeal should be estimated, not by its fervour, which is frequently intemperate, but by the doctrines which they believe so important. Whether the system of St. Austin and of Calvin be true or false, whether or no those who embrace it quit the path of experience for the regions of fancy; whether they fashion their tenets in conformity to the mechanism of the human mind, or compel the operations of the mind to obey the capriciousness of feeling, and the extravagance of passion: however this be, such as repose on this system with expectations of eternal happiness, and reckon it almost the only foundation of their virtue, must not be prejudged without examination, nor too hastily condemned. Men deserve no censure for believing a system to be true, but for not giving it an impartial investigation; not always for being mis-informed or mistaken, but for being proud of their folly,

* Edwards on Religious Affections, part ii. p. 88.

and arrogant in their ignorance; for trifling with moral obligations, while pretending to divine influences, and the powerful ties of religion; for bearing about the tale of scandal against an heretical brother, while offering hypocritical prayers for his recovery. Several, whose names might be here introduced, were a contemptible, because a mean, indolent, malignant race; petty theologues, who thought that to reason was a mark of unregeneracy, and to enforce virtue favoured of carnality: others, who preached against Robinson from their pulpits, and who were in return lampooned and be-sermonised by him, were not, indeed, without failings; but, notwithstanding, were men of sincere intentions, of strong convictions, and of virtuous conduct*; though even by them Robinson was too illiberally handled. Did he indulge against them the Vanitas Ingenii†? He received in return a plentiful portion

* Of the persons more particularly here alluded to, one was Dr. Samuel Stennett, of whom it is but justice to say, in addition to what has been already said, that, in private and domestic life, he was amiable and affectionate, and that his sermons on Personal Religion discover considerable talents: the other was Abraham Boothe, who in his Pædobaptism examined on the Principles, Concessions, and Conclusions of the most learned Pædobaptists, discovers extensive reading; and in his Apology for the Baptists shews, that he possesses the powers of close reasoning from his own principles,

† The vanity of genius.

of the *Theologicum Odium**. Robinson, as well as the opposite party, laboured under mistakes, and some it would be no difficult task to point out; both exhibited instances of human frailty, though to dwell on them is not the province of biography.

That different sects, and that zealous rivals in the same sect, are ever forward in bringing against each other mutual charges of error and of contradiction, both in doctrine and in discipline, is an observation so obvious, that it may almost be received as an established proverb. The admirers of "The History of the Corruptions of Christianity†" are forward to maintain, that the system of Calvin is less favourable to morals, than that received by themselves; and another publication‡ labours to prove, that Socinianism is more unfavourable to a religious and virtuous course, than Calvinism. But though the duty of the biographer is rather to ascertain and to illustrate characters, than to defend, or to controvert tenets, it is certainly not intended to sacrifice Robinson at the shrine of orthodoxy, nor to concede, that Calvin's system can attain those sublime heights,

* Theological hatred.

† By Dr. Priestley.

‡ "The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems compared as to their Moral Tendency," By Andrew Fuller.

to which Robinson's generous soul carried the love of liberty and of benevolence. Theological morals are not always the purest, nor theological language the most liberal. Justice, that weighs all circumstances, guides to truth*.

Robinson ever used to maintain, that the unpardonable sin which he committed, was his conduct towards the Calvinist preachers: and it is certain, that the clerical attire, the official solemnity, the severe and morose orthodoxy, the super-celestial raptures (in some such manner he used to talk) of many of his Calvinistical friends, he frequently satirised as well in private circles, as in the pulpit, with all the point of ingenious raillery. This he called "pricking the bladder."—"Preachers (said he) are too full of wind, and it is mercy to let it out."—He did not even spare himself,—“My people (said he) can preach themselves, if they think proper; but they are determined to keep a parson; that is their only reason for supporting me.”

Another circumstance must not be past unnoticed. The baptists have a fund in London to assist their poor ministers of the Calvinistic persuasion. Of those who solicit assistance, a

* ——— Δίκη δ' ὑπὲρ ὕβριος ἰσχύει

Ες τέλος ἐξελεύσεται. Hesiod. Erg. v. 215.

testimonial,

testimonial, declaratory of a sound faith, is expected. The Calvinist-baptists conceived, that none but orthodox preachers were entitled, according to the original condition of the institution, to receive assistance. Robinson thought, as the fund continued to be supported by voluntary subscriptions, that the sphere of its liberality should be enlarged. "Why (said he) should benevolence be confined to a party? Why the Christian be overlooked, and the Calvinist only regarded?"

This invariable friend to religious liberty, therefore, laboured to break down those barriers of theological points; he urged, that to be in want, and to be a Christian, were sufficient qualifications "to receive charity."—The baptist-board in London thought otherwise: they insisted, that Robinson, under a pretence of introducing liberality into the churches, studied to spread the contagion of heresy; to weaken the frame, and to destroy the bloom of Calvinism; that out of the milk of his philanthropy he wished, as it were, to compose a draught, which, after insensibly infecting the pastors, would operate as a slow poison on their flocks. Many ministers, therefore, who began to relish his doctrine, were obliged to forego their accustomed claims.

In

In a letter to his sensible friend, Mary Hays*, he writes as follows:

“ *March 4, 1789,*

“ There is in our congregation (for we receive all) a very worthy, but very poor old minister, who chose his last days should be spent with a people he esteems. The old man was advised to petition the baptist-board for a share of that charity, which they annually assign to superannuated ministers. Instead of sending him charity, they sent him faith†, and informed him,

* This female writer is well known in a respectable literary circle: but the only publication that has yet appeared with her name, is entitled, “ *Essays and Letters, Moral and Miscellaneous;*” it is an early production of herself and sister, but discovers marks of ingenuity and reflection.

† Robinson means articles of faith to subscribe. This fund has been already mentioned, p. 178 of these Memoirs: and with respect to the gratuity bestowed on me several years ago by the fundees, I think it but justice to myself to observe here, that no articles of faith were ever proposed to me. Indeed I had sacrificed so many private comforts, and had turned my back on such flattering prospects, in pursuit of religious opinion, and liberty of conscience, preferring to go destitute among the dissenters, to subscribing the 39 articles, and to indulging any expectation, either from college, or from the church, that, in my greatest necessities, I experienced something of Robinson’s pride: had the baptist-fundees offered me articles of faith to subscribe, I should certainly have reckoned it the

him, they had made a law not to relieve any, except they subscribed a creed, a *human* creed, which they sent him; and the first article of which

the greatest insult they could have offered me: and they were too prudent to propose them. But I rather suspect that Robinson used, if not a *pious*, at least a *benevolent* fraud on this occasion. To speak the truth, I never knew the actual relation, in which I stood to this generous man, till a few days from writing this paragraph. All I knew was, (for I was extremely inattentive to many things that occurred at the period now alluded to,) that Robinson discovered for me the greatest friendship; that I was much indebted to himself and many of his friends; that I resided with him a twelvemonth; that I used to preach for him occasionally, and that, during my continuance at his house, he requested of me, *as a particular favour*, to draw up a Latin treatise on the Scripture-Doctrine of Justification, with an English translation, which he wished to shew some of my London friends; this was accordingly performed; and, perhaps, the baptist-board, through respect for Robinson, for he was at that time in great estimation with them, and through tenderness for me, might receive this treatise as a substitute for a subscription to their creed. The civility received from the baptist-fund defrayed the expenses of my board, &c. while I was at Robinson's house, and was, I suppose, paid into his hands for that purpose. But though the assistance was received under the above circumstances, the services rendered to the recipient were not, on the one hand, less essential: but, on the other, neither must the London baptists, nor any other friends, who, amidst the excursions of my roving life, have rendered me services, expect that I should bow at the shrine of a spurious gratitude. True morality consists in the speaking of truth, and in the practice of justice; and the great

which is "There are three divine persons in the unity of the Godhead! Absolute nonsense! supported by tyranny over men's consciences. The old man believes as they do, and he sent up a faith, as sound as old Calvin's itself; but he could not help boggling at the idea of a London lord over a country brother's conscience. In this church* we all hold inviolably the perfection of scripture without human additions; and, for the rest, the old man believes what he approves, though nobody hardly believes with him, for we are only brethren, and nobody plays Jupiter here."

The baptist-board, however, still insisted, that they did but act in conformity with the rules of the fund, while Robinson, who scarcely saw any orthodoxy so important, as those

great solace of human life is the enjoyment of liberty. Whatever opposes these, should be resisted with composed yet dignified firmness; nor should the moralist, through the weakness of a groveling affection, or the irritations of a false gratitude, shorten his periods, or yield to unreasonable restraints. Gratitude, as commonly understood, is the nurse of undefinable weaknesses, and of innumerable indiscretions, the source of dangerous and gigantic crimes; but whoever understands the nature and practice of justice, though he may think it his duty to deceive those expectations, which the system of morals taught in the church, as well as in the world, countenances, will never, in the fair sense of the word, be ungrateful.

* Robinson meant his church at Cambridge.

simple

simple principles, which lead to a virtuous course of life, pronounce the strict baptists in an error. These matters continuing to widen the breach between him and his former brethren, each thought the other very wide of the truth.

Oh! Robinson, thou man of playful wit, of luxuriant imagination, of elaborate investigation, of eloquence that led captive admiring congregations, but of a benevolence that sighed for a wide-extended sphere, of sympathies, and of susceptibilities, that made thee feel the distresses of others, the wrongs and insults, sometimes such as were imaginary, that oppressed thyself, thine was but the common lot of humanity!

Extraordinary talents, generosity impatient of bounds, and a mind unsubmitive to restraints, accompanied, as they usually are, with exquisite sensibilities, and frequently with striking infirmities, are doomed to experience all the vicissitudes of forward hopes, and of glowing delights, of hasty anticipations that produce confidence, and of galling disappointments that terminate in misanthropy.

However severely some of Robinson's Calvinistic friends concluded concerning his conduct

duct in this affair, many, even of them, believed him to be influenced by the purest benevolence ; and the churches and poor ministers that declined a little from orthodoxy, thought him entitled to their warmest gratitude.

This was particularly the case with the Welch baptists. The baptists in general, both in England, in Wales, and in America, entertain the most liberal sentiments on civil government, and, to their praise be it spoken, have been before-hand with the governments of the world, in asserting the liberties of mankind ; but the Welch baptists have been particularly zealous, and many of them, still retaining the ancient British spirit, are as much devoted to religious as civil liberty. In Wales there exists a curious phenomenon—a few churches that unite the belief of predestination with the doctrines of Arius or Sabellius: yet very respectable authority, Job David, a name well known among the Welch baptists, asserts, that this is actually the case with several churches. The pride of the Welch spirit was, therefore, wounded, and, through the medium of a very sensible and amiable man, the Welch ministers returned their thanks to Robinson for the part sustained by him in this business.

The following extract of a letter reflects honour

nour on the person who wrote it, and on the person by whom it was received :—

“ SIR,

“ Allow me to apologise for the length of time I have taken to acknowledge the receipt of your friendly letter from London, and to express, on the part of the Welch ministers, the obligations they are under for the spirited part you have taken, in voluntarily becoming their advocate, regarding the requirement made by the fundees. This business originated with one of our ministers, more as the effect of chagrin, than any malign spirit : a separation having taken place in his church, he hastily concluded the cause to be Arianism or Sabellianism. My opinion is, that but few if any will comply; and should a few be disposed, they will make use of their provincial language, which will afford the fundees some difficulty to understand. ’Tis to me rather a painful employ to persuade many of them to spurn at the demand, knowing how acceptable a few guineas are to them, without being able to point out any resources to fly to, as a supply for the loss. I have written to the secretary on the subject : and if what I have proposed will not satisfy, the majority will prove that they are not degenerated from their ancestors, in an ardent love for liberty.”

The

The writer of the preceding letter was W. Williams, of Cardigan, in South Wales—a man of independent fortune, of very liberal sentiments, and exceedingly well informed; he is in the commission of the peace, and discharges the duties of a respectable magistrate, and of a dissenting minister to a numerous congregation.

It must be, further, added on this subject, that the Welch baptist-ministers had never been called upon to sign a confession of faith, till a report of Arianism, Socinianism, Sabelianism, or of something of that kind, was spread, which caused a motion to be made at the meeting of the fundees, that was carried, viz. “that the ministers and churches, who receive out of this fund; on their next application, give a particular and explicit account of their faith, especially relating to the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

All which remains to be added on this subject, is,—that the most distant reflection on the characters of individuals is not intended by the preceding account: that men may be angels of liberality in their private capacity; but that the influence of theological opinions on societies is inconceivably great; that the man in the world, and the man in the church, are sometimes as dif-

ferent persons, as men born on opposite sides of the globe;—that many of the Welch baptist-ministers and churches never signed the creed, and of course received not the bounty of the fund;—that others reckoned it but just in the baptist-board to demand a test of orthodoxy, and but reasonable that a Calvinist-minister, before he received the alms of this fund, should subscribe a Calvinist confession.

As to Robinson, he thought the whole a system of oppression, and used to lament to his university-friends as follows: “Many of our dissenters admire your clerical petitioners, who opposed subscription in the church, as well as Tyrwhitt, Jebb, Edwards, and Friend, who opposed it in the university, and yet impose it on their own students and their own ministers.”

— Quid rides? Mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur. HOR. SAT. I. V. 69.

Why do you laugh, my Non-con? Change the name;
High church, or low, enslaved is much the same.

D.

In the close of the year 1787, our author met with a severe domestic affliction, which is very pathetically described in letters to his friends, Daniel Turner, Henry Keene,
Mary

Mary Hays, and Dr. Toulmin. The letter addressed to Dr. Toulmin shall be transcribed.

“ The last question in your favour of July 18th, “How your family is?” requires an answer which you will accept as an apology for my silence. Alas! my heart is too full. I can only tell you we are now recovered, and returned to our usual labours. Three years, the loveliest of all girls, the pride and the beauty of my family, was declining. In October she fell asleep, saying, as she reclined her head, Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Seventeen years of age—five feet ten inches high—straight as a palm-tree, a fund of wit, an innocence of manners, and a piety and virtue regulated by the wise and just sentiments of the great Supreme, all, all are fled, and here am I,—here,

As on a lonely building's top,
The sparrow tells her moan,
Far from the tents of joy and hope,
I sit and grieve alone.

“ My dear sir, say nothing to me ; I try to acquiesce. I comfort my wife, and the rest of my family, and in collecting for them, soothe myself ; but this hath been a great wound ; for all were most affectionately attached to the

lovely Julia.—I have done.—I am a parent.—
Forgive me.”

This young woman was all that is described by Robinson. The “Elegy on the Death of a young Lady,” inserted in my poems, was occasioned by the death of Julia Robinson. It shall be inserted here.

I.

If ever poet breathes a generous strain—
If ever pity heaves the tenderest sighs—
It is when virtuous youth is doom'd to pain;
It is when blooming beauty droops and dies.

II.

But if with youth, with beauty, were combin'd
The sweetest flower of genius opening fair,
The softest manners, and the purest mind,
Heroes might weep, and faints let fall a tear.

III.

Take then, oh! earth, take to thy clay-cold bed,
Beauty and youth, as rich as earth can send;
And take the tear, tear softer ne'er was shed,
Of father, mother, brother, sister, friend.

IV.

But long thou must not hold that beauteous clay,
That virtuous maid more lovely still shall rise;
What's born of heaven shall spring to endless day;
Beauty may fade, but virtue never dies.

A Prospectus of one of Robinson's histories
was this year transmitted by him to several of
the

the churches: and after all the religious bickerings stirred up amongst them, it is agreeable to read the expressions of unbounded respect, which they returned: though, indeed, many of these expressions were mere words. For though they could not help esteeming the man, they certainly were not bound to countenance what they supposed his errors. How could it be expected that the orthodox should become hearty patrons to an author, who, though with one hand he supported the cause of baptism, intended to smite, as they supposed, with the other, the fabric of Calvinism? Some, indeed, even of the orthodox baptists continued his faithful and invariable friends to the last; but with respect to many, such too, who were among the first to encourage his undertaking, he had reason, both in behalf of himself and his history, to exclaim, "my mother's children were angry with me*."

The names of his correspondents this year have appeared before: there will, therefore, be less occasion to introduce them again. One, however, should be mentioned, not only as not

* So at least it is asserted by Benjamin Staley, a sensible and highly esteemed friend of Robinson's. Staley was one of the original committee, that met for the purpose of soliciting our author to undertake the writing of a History of the Baptists. He is now a deserter from the standard of orthodoxy.

having been introduced before, but as one of the oldest, and one of not the least sincere of Robert Robinson's friends. This was S. W. Wilkins of Norwich, a man to whom, I embrace the opportunity, in passing, of acknowledging very essential services rendered to myself in past times.

From the various letters written to our author this year, relative to his history, one shall be laid before our readers, written by a person who is known to be exceedingly well acquainted with many curious matters in ecclesiastical history. This is Joshua Thomson, a man of an independent fortune, and for many years an occasional preacher among the general baptists*.

“ REVEREND SIR,

“From the specimen of your history of the baptists, or rather of baptism, which you have honoured me with, I really think, if my opinion were of any worth, that the work, when finished, will be an important acquisition to the Republic of Letters,—cast some rays of light upon the dark regions of antiquity,—

* This person's name has been several times introduced before, and by mistake, he was called John Thomson: his letters are signed only with the initial J. and this caused the mistake.

and

and by stating indisputable facts, no matter whether through the hands of Arians, Socinians, or Athanasians, friends, or enemies, help an honest enquirer in his search after truth; and, at the same time, (if I may be allowed to speak my free sentiments, without the imputation of flattery, which I am very far from being inclined to), be a lasting monument of the learned author's extensive reading, indefatigable industry, and singular sagacity, in selecting proper materials for his subject. Under this conviction, I heartily wish it may be laid before the public; though my state of health for some time past hath been such, as to render it very uncertain, whether I may live to see the plan completed. Of its general spread there seems to be little doubt, considered only as a book of literature, to adorn the libraries of the learned and curious.

" I am, Sir,

" Your Obedient Humble Servant,

" J. THOMSON."

" *Clapham, June 14, 1787.*"

CHAPTER XX.

Short Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge, in the years 1787, and 1788.

IN the years 1787 and 1788, some transactions occurred in the university of Cambridge, which could not but interest Robinson, no less from the direct course of his studies, and the powerful energy of his convictions, than from the consequences that ensued, and from our author's connections with some of the parties concerned.—Here the business of subscription to the thirty-nine articles will be again brought before the reader.

On the eleventh of December 1787, a Grace was introduced into the senate-house, by a learned and liberal-minded man, Dr. Edwards*; the object of which was, to remove subscription to the usual form, at the time of taking the degree of bachelor of arts.

This Grace was rejected, and no reason assigned for its rejection; nor was any reason

* Editor of Plutarch de Educatione Liberorum, and author of Remarks on Dr. Kipling's Preface to Beza.

urged,

urged, even for the exercise of such discretionary power. To the praise of the university, however, and to the honour of literature, be it spoken, that the only person, who attempted a public vindication of that act of mental degradation,—subscription, was Dr. Kipling, deputy-professor of divinity, a man, who, in every literary department, in which he has made his appearance, either before the university, or the public *, has only appeared, to expose his insufficiency, and to render himself ridiculous: another person who made himself conspicuous on this occasion, was the present Dr. Coulthurst, a disciple of St. Austin's, and Calvin's, then a fellow of Sidney-college.

The person, who more particularly interested himself in this business, and who afterwards took a more active part in the town and university, so, as at length to undergo a public trial in the senate-house, to be deprived of his

* Witness, the fac-simile of Beza's MS. and the vile Prolegomena. The publication of the above celebrated MS. should, for the honour of literature, have been assigned to more able hands. When the deputy-professor undertook this task, it is to be lamented, that some intelligent friend had not saved his credit, by giving him seasonable advice,

Εστιν το πολμαν, ω φιλ', ανδρος ου σοφου.

Rashness is not the wise man's character.

tutorship,

tutorship, and to be expelled from college, was William Frend, a learned and worthy man, then a fellow and tutor of Jesus-college, who, from between the years 1780, and 1787, had officiated as a minister of the church of England. Through disapprobation of the doctrine of the Trinity, he resigned the living of Long-Stanton, near Cambridge; he, afterwards, took a vigorous part in opposing subscription to religious tests, and in spreading his favourite theological tenets, in contradiction to the Trinitarian, called Unitarian, through the town and university*. In 1788, he was deprived of the respectable employment of tutor of Jesus-college, and the attendant profits, amounting to above an hundred and fifty pounds a year. In this business Dr. Beadon, an old acquaintance of Robinson's, then master of Jesus-college, now bishop of Gloucester, acted as accuser and judge: and "sentence was pronounced without the formal requisition of a defence." The bishop of Ely, visiter of Jesus-college, ratified this sentence by his decree †.

For

* See Frend's Thoughts on Religious Tests, &c. Appendix, p. 34.

† Frend published a pamphlet entitled, "Thoughts on Subscription to Religious Tests, addressed to Dr. Coulthurst," and an "Address to the Members of the Church of England, and to Protestant Trinitarians in general, exhorting

For every thing that relates to this business, the subsequent trial of William Frend in the vice-chancellor's court for publishing a pamphlet entitled "Peace and Union," his very able defence, the sentence pronounced, together with his appeal to the Court of King's Bench, &c. the reader is referred to two very interesting works, entitled "An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge, against William Frend, M. A. Fellow of Jesus-College :—" and a "Sequel" to these Proceedings, since published.

The connection of these university-proceedings with the memoirs of Robinson, arises from William Frend's subsequent friendship with him. He became a pretty constant attendant at Robinson's meeting, established a theological lecture at a private house in the town, and occasionally delivered expository discourses at Fen-Stanton, in Huntingdonshire, in a meeting room belonging to John Curwan. Curwan is a very worthy dissenting minister, an old ac-

ing them to turn from the Worship of three Persons to the Worship of the True God." A Second Address, also, was published by him on the same subject. He also published "Coulthurst's Blunders exposed, or a Review of several Texts, that Mr. Coulthurst lately produced in his Sermon before the University of Cambridge, as proofs of the established Doctrine of the Trinity."

quaintance

quaintance of Robinson's, who had lately embraced the doctrine of the unitarians.

Robinson's connection with Frend, and with others, maintaining similar tenets, tended probably to confirm his convictions, and to incline him to adopt a more decided tone, as to doctrines, in his public discourses; though he remained, to the last, rather a friend to liberty, than to precision of religious sentiment, or to strict theological language.

Robinson's obligations to several members of the university were at this period not inconsiderable: and to their friendship, he was indebted for the free use of books in the public library, which much facilitated his literary inquiries, and enabled him to complete his two elaborate histories. The following extract of a letter to his respected friend Daniel Turner affords a proper opportunity of introducing their names in a connection more natural, perhaps, than in the preceding controversy.

Our author is giving a kind of Journal of his literary engagements, a practice he was much accustomed to in letters to confidential friends,

“ *October 8, 1788,*

“ Lord's day, After service Frend,
Barham,

Barham, Paulus, Dyer, another, and myself, drank tea with the venerable Mr. Tyrwhitt. He is the grandson of Gibson, bishop of London, and stood full in the path to preferment : but conscience forbad : he resigned all, even his fellowship, and now lives in college, as in an hotel, a tranquil life of literary labour, and universal beneficence. Here I procured a MS. which Mr. Frend had taken out of the public library for me. We supped at Chesterton, every hour receiving some new information.

“ *Monday.* With the utmost regret, parted with Barham to Oxford, and Paulus to Germany.

May peace attend the path they go,
And light their steps surround.

“ Spent the day in examining an ancient MS. of the New Testament of Wickliffe, lent me that morning by Mr. Frend, fellow of Jesus, out of the cabinet of Jesus library,” &c.

Of most of the persons alluded to, in the preceding letter, mention has been made before, but it seems just and respectful, still further to notice them, as Robinson's friends lay not a little, at this period, among persons of this description, and on a variety of occasions, he was
much

much indebted to their civilities. On the benevolence of Robert Tyrwhitt, M. A. extended beyond the limits of Cambridge, on the liberality of his mind, and on the extent of his knowledge, it is unnecessary to make any remarks. On various occasions, our author was highly obliged to him for pointing out many scarce, and valuable books, both manuscripts, as well as printed volumes, in the public library.

On the character of William Frend, M. A. as a man of learning and judgment, it is also unnecessary to enlarge. Robinson's obligations to him were of the same kind with those to Tyrwhitt: and to his diligent and friendly attentions, the admirers of Robinson's "*Ecclesiastical Researches*," published since the author's death, are much indebted, for that accuracy with which it was presented to the public. The press was corrected by him, though no alteration was made either in the colour of the language, or sentiment.

J. Foster Barham had been educated in Germany, and, by his accurate knowledge of the German language, and literature, was able to furnish Robinson with many useful hints and translations from German authors little known, which assisted him in the subsequent selection of historical German writers.

Of this highly esteemed friend of Robinson's, it would be irregular not to say something further. He is the son of a person of very large fortune, in Bedfordshire, who died while he resided in Hertford-college, Oxford, brother to the present member for Stocbridge. He at first was a student of Magdalen-college, Cambridge, and was a warm disciple and friend, several years prior to this period, of Robinson. He received some illiberal treatment at Magdalen-college, and afterwards entered himself gentleman commoner at Hertford-college, Oxford. The sacrifices to liberality of sentiment, and generous, disinterested affection, made by this worthy man, it would be unnecessary to particularise. He is a person enamoured of retirement, and devoted to inquiry.

Paulus, a learned German, an intimate friend of Foster Barham's, is a professor in the University of Jena, a man of great critical skill, more particularly in the oriental languages, author of a learned work written in the German language, entitled, "A Philological Key to the Old Testament."

Barham, besides other services, translated for Robinson, from the German, several parts of Meiners' History of Switzerland, which contained an account of a very curious sect, visit-
ed

ed by Meiners, that inhabited, with twenty-six teachers, the heights of Mount Jura, living as a society of friends in peace and plenty, beyond all the barbarous refinements of extreme civilisation, and the despotical arrangements of aristocratical subordination.

Paulus examined for Robinson, at Oxford, two curious Syriac MSS. written by those easterns, who inhabit Bassora, on the gulf of Persia; whom some call Sabeans, others disciples of John. This account confirmed several parts of Robinson's histories, which he had taken from Asséman, and Ignatius a Jesu. Robinsonal so received of Paulus from these MSS. several other articles of value, which illustrated a part of history, of which Robinson said, "no article of ecclesiastical history was so obscure, and so much in want of elucidation."

Of James Lambert, M. A. burfar of Trinity-college, Cambridge, late Greek professor; Thomas Fyfe Palmer, B. D. and William Hammond, M. A. late fellows of Queen's-college, respectful mention should also here be made. These liberal-minded and learned men were ever ready to assist Robinson with books from different libraries.

The latter years of Robinson's life may appear

pear to many too hastily gone over, such usually being the most interesting, and the most fertile in discoveries. But the latter years of the most active spirits are frequently spent in retirement: and, as they become entirely domesticated, we no longer expect that variety, which charms the admirers of biography. We are now rarely to look for Robinson at ordinations and associations, holding in raptures religious assemblies, or solving cases of conscience, and settling differences in churches; seldom to find him even engaged in what he most delighted, familiar lectures among his poor villagers. We must not, however, infer that his preaching was generally unacceptable: by no means: many of his Calvinistic friends were still proud of his services, and cordially attached to the preacher: and among dissenters more remote from orthodoxy, but distinguished for their benig- nity, he obtained a new set of admirers.

With his congregation at Cambridge, he still continued his ministerial labours: by them his decreasing popularity as a public instructor among many of the Calvinist churches, was easily dispensed with: "He was, they said, the minister of our choice, and still is of our esteem," Among the more valuable part of this society he was admired to the last; and if he was less attended to by some former disciples,

he obtained a more extensive reputation, and gained a more general esteem.

The truth is, he was now entering upon a large field of enquiry, and it became necessary for him to be a recluse. We have already observed, that his historical enquiries were directed to a review of persons, and to the investigation of facts, dispersed among different nations, disputed by contending ecclesiastics, involved in labyrinths uncommonly intricate, and, by many, reckoned not worth the trouble of unravelling. In some cases he had no guides; and in others, not satisfied with the ordinary conductors, he found it expedient to consult guides more original, and better informed. He thought it necessary to learn the Italian, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the German, with other languages. The memorials of remote antiquity, and the volumes of polite literature, that he not only cursorily perused, but minutely examined, and accurately digested, might surprise not only superficial readers, but elaborate enquirers. The following Letters to a writer, among the modern Welch, (I speak after two well-informed men*) the best acquainted with the Welch history, will explain this matter.

* David Williams, the political writer, and Edward Williams, the Welch bard, so describe him.

" To the Reverend Mr. Thomas, Leominster, Cardiganshire.

" REVEREND SIR,

" About two or three years ago, a committee of our denomination in London desired me to collect materials for an history of the baptists. Mr. Thompson lent his papers, which I got transcribed; but when all put together, they are confined and unsatisfactory. I thought an history of the baptists might be traced through all the dark ages of popery; and last winter I addressed myself to the study, and made some progress in the history of foreign baptists; but, I confess freely to you, the greatness of the work discourages me, for I feel my incompetence. There is only one thing that induces me to persevere. I have access to the university-library, and I am the only one of our brethren who can come at one of the national repositories, where books on all subjects, and of every price, are to be inspected. I have had loads, and loads more I must have, if I finish the plan I have laid out. I find the Bohemian and Moravian baptists were many of them Arians, and some a sort of quakers. The Polish baptists were Socinians,—the Transylvanians something worse,—the English baptists, at the reformation, were Arminians,—but all of them,

ancient and modern, were zealous defenders of the perfection of scripture, the rights of conscience against tyranny, both civil and sacred, and the absolute necessity of evangelical purity, according to their own ideas of it. I am strongly inclined to believe that the ancient Britons, who resisted Austin the monk, were baptists; but of what kind, in regard to doctrine, I do not know. I hope to come to this part of the history, and, indeed, finish the whole this winter. I think, if I publish it, it will be only under the title of an *Essay toward an History of the Baptists*; and I think it will be comprised, with authorities for all we advance, in notes, in one volume, quarto.

“ I have been obliged to let your valuable papers lie till I arrive at that part of the history: and then I will return them with many thanks. I wish most heartily, before I conclude any thing about printing, that I could have the advantage of consulting you, concerning the plan itself, and the manner in which it is executed. Your wise hand would strike out foreign matter, and insert both arguments and ornaments, of which I am incapable. Providence denies me that advantage; and I hope, if ever I live to publish this work, that you will treat it, as you do every thing else, with the politeness of a gentleman and the candour of a Christian.

In another letter, he observes as follows:—

“ REVEREND SIR,

“ I perceive baptists are of all ages, and all countries, and connected with a variety of subjects, of which I had no notion, till I went heartily into the business. Absolutely we have no history, and we have suffered enemies to tell our tale. My collection will make about four thin quartos. The first is an history of baptism; the last three contain an history of baptists. The first is divided into essays, and they again into sections. The whole is intended to contain an account of the rise, progress, connections, corruptions, appendages, and reformation of baptism, and so on. The historical part begins with apostolical churches,—goes through the several countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe; and ends with America. Our friends have said, “Print.” I will not ’till I have taken the opinion of a few wise and good men, on the propriety of such a work. For this purpose, I have dipped promiscuously into the middle of the first volume, taken out two sheets, and struck off twenty or thirty copies, one of which begs your acceptance. The only question I take the liberty to ask, is, whether, as may be judged by such a specimen, a work of this kind is likely to serve the cause? If not, I have done, Happy should I be, if I could

consult you, who have turned your attention so much that way.

“ R. ROBINSON.”

The above letters appear to fill this gap of history more naturally than the mere narrative of biography could have done, as they point out more directly his literary pursuits at this time, and are in themselves valuable. But for this long introduction, and for the subsequent account of a history, deemed by many unimportant, and which if the baptists reckon interesting, some of them do not reckon the most useful work of this learned writer, some apology, perhaps, should be made. It should, therefore, be known, that this is one of the most elaborate of our author's writings; that it is allowedly the most learned of any history extant on the subject; that it abounds with entertainment, as well as instruction, and, on some points, takes a course of enquiry, which, if it has been pursued at all by other writers, has not been pursued with equal success. Of the merit of this work I have elsewhere given my free opinion: and, having delivered it when I was engaged in a course of reading, that enabled me to form a more accurate estimate of its character, than, perhaps, I should at present, I shall still trespass on the patience of the reader in a subsequent chapter, and lay before him
such

such remarks, as I at that time made. A short analysis shall first be given; the remarks shall immediately follow. In the work, from whence the critique is extracted, many other observations are made on the same subject. The Analysis is borrowed from the Recapitulation at the end of the History of Baptism.

CHAPTER XXI.

An Account of Robinson's History of Baptism.

TO this singular production we shall devote several pages.

The first chapter, then, attempts to narrate the origin of baptism; which, according to Robinson, was an order of God, executed by John, in the little kingdom of Judæa, a province of the Roman empire, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. The second enquires what baptism John administered, and shews that it was that of immersion in water. The third treats of the persons baptised, and attempts to prove they were only believers: and here Jesus is introduced as Lord of a new œconomy. The two next proceed to enquire whether baptism were in use among the Jews before John, or among the Gentiles; and it is shewn that it was not, but was altogether a new and divine appointment*. The seventh chapter treats of the improvement of the institution by Jesus Christ. "He did not alter the subject, a believer; or immersion, the mode; but he extended the commission to baptise so as to include the gentiles of that age, and all mankind, who might become

* But that baptisms were practised by Gentiles, see Otthonis Sperlingii de Baptismo Ethnicorum, Cap. iv.

his disciples in future ages." The next chapter observes, that the congregations, collected by the immediate apostles of Christ, were baptised by immersion, and that none but believers appear on this occasion; and "here, says Robinson, ends sacred history, without exhibiting any infant, or any sprinkling." The ninth chapter and two following narrate the Eastern, Roman, and Mahometan favourite practice of bathing; and the twelfth shews, that the primitive Christians erected buildings for the purposes of sacred bathing, and called them baptisteries from baptism which they practised by immersion there. The next four chapters describe several baptisteries, both of Eastern and Western Christians, and shew that their histories are credible, and their conduct proper, only on supposition that they baptised by immersion. The seventeenth chapter introduces artists depicting baptism, and unwarily obscuring what they meant to elucidate. The next treats of fonts both natural and artificial, and shews that a confusion of names introduced a confusion of things, by which means the original practice of baptism became more corrupted. The baptism of infants, that is, of minors, so called in general, follows; and here it is to be observed, that the equivocalness of words went to add to the corruption of baptism. The next chapter shews that the weak fondness of parents,

rents, and the enthusiasm of the monks, helped yet more to corrupt baptism, by transferring to babes an institute only proper for men.—The twenty-first chapter, and the two following, shew that Africa, the least enlightened part of the Christian world, cherished the baptism of babes, and that Augustine, according to Robinson, a pretended saint, but an illiterate hypocrite, brought it to perfection there in the fifth century; but the novel practice had no extent or duration worth mentioning. The next chapter shews how the Easterns depraved the ceremony, and brought it down gradually to children. Chapter twenty-fifth examines a pretended canon of some poor African monks, who, to supply their wants, imported African baptism into Spain in the sixth century. The next chapter shews how the emperor Charlemagne imposed on the Saxons a law for infant baptism, to serve the political purpose of enslaving them and others of mankind, and how other despots copied his example, and turned the institute of Christ into an engine of state.—The twenty-seventh chapter accounts for the extensive progress of infant baptism, by shewing how well it suited the interest of various classes of men, and the very corrupt manners of those ignorant, disordered, and barbarous times.—Next follows an account of several consequences of making baptism necessary to babes,

babes, and exhibits the last stage of the corruption of it,—the practice of the baptising of infants unborn, who could not be immersed, but might, by art, be wetted; and so the priests found themselves obliged to affirm that moistening a part was equal to bathing the whole. “This vulgar, indecent, and barbarous farce is yet acted abroad, under the false pretence, that the wise and good sovereign of the universe hath connected invisible and eternal benefits, not with knowledge and virtue, but with the exercises of a priest, how silly and sordid soever both he and they may be.” However, “this whole system, Robinson continues, is consistent with itself: if it be once admitted that baptism and eternal life are inseparably connected; the necessity, and even the charity of baptising every living human animal, follow of course, and the doctrine is established, that there is no salvation out of the church.”—Baptism had been practised many ages, in divers countries, by all sorts of men, and it had been connected with a great variety of other practices. These connections are treated of in the two following chapters, and they imply, says Robinson, that the institute had been made very free with, to serve secular interests, by men, who had not regulated religion by its only standard, the holy scripture, and that even these abuses tell the original form. The thirty-third chapter

ter traces the history of asperſion, and ſhews that the monks introduced from pagan rites the practice of ſprinkling holy water, which in the end was miſtaken for Chriſtian baptiſm. The thirty-fourth chapter treats of anabaptiſts; chapter thirty-fifth of the ſtate of baptiſm in the oriental churches. In the thirty-fixth chapter, the mode of adminiſtering baptiſm in the eſtabliſhed Greek and Roman churches is explained; in the thirty-feventh, reformed baptiſm is examined. The thirty-eighth chapter exhibits the manner, in which baptiſm is adminiſtered by Engliſh, Dutch, American, and German baptiſts. Chapter the thirty-ninth preſents the true ground of action in religion: and the work cloſes with a review of the apoſtolic churches.

The following quotation will explain Robinſon's opinion of the primitive mode of adminiſtering baptiſm, which differs from the practice of the modern baptiſts: according to this mode he baptiſed ſeveral of his own family.

“ The candidate (he obſerves) ſtood erect, and the adminiſtrator, while he pronounced the baptiſmal words, laid his right hand on the hind part of the head of the candidate, and bowed him gently forward, till he was all under water, Hence baptiſm was taken for an act

act of divine worship, a stooping, and paying of a divine homage to God. The baptised person raised himself up and walked out of the water, and another candidate followed,—the administrator standing all the time erect in his place. This method hath more than antiquity to recommend it. It is so easy to the administrator, so perfect an immersion, so disengaged to the candidate, so free from giving pain to the spectators, a method so decent, and expeditious, that it is a wonder it is not universally practised. It requires for a middle sized person, on condition of a proper genuflexion, which it is almost impossible to avoid making, in the administration, three feet of water, and for a very tall man, three feet and an half. There are, as was observed before, the remains of many ancient baptisteries abroad, in which are various antiquities descriptive of this mode. The bishop stood in the water; and the candidate, in his baptism, bowed forward under his hand, which is the meaning of Prudentius, when he speaks of baptising the breast, and of Tertullian, when he says Christians of his time were baptised, by bowing down with great simplicity, without pomp, and in few words. The baptist churches, it may be hoped, will forgive this animadversion. It is the glory of their constitution, that an individual

dividual may propose his opinion, and that nobody is obliged to adopt it*."

The following remarks on this history are in the second edition of my Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the 39 articles, p. 419.

" As Robinson's history is allowed to be the completest defence of the opinion of the baptists, and to contain much curious matter not formed into argument before, for adult baptism, I shall not quit this subject without making a few remarks on it. Independently then of the evidence brought in favour of the main object of his book, our author hath also, in part at least, removed an objection brought against adult baptism, from an indelicacy in the form of administration, as practised by the baptists. For I think he has made it highly probable, that the primitive mode was for the administrator to stand in the water, putting his hand to the back part of the candidate's head, who also stood in the water, till he was wholly immersed; though "demissus" does not, I own, necessarily correspond to "demisso vultu, demisso capite†," &c. for demissus will apply to a person placed in, or let down into the water in any way. However,

* See Robinson's History of Baptism.

† Tertullian de Bapt.

considered

considered in its connection in Tertullian, Robinson's account is, I think, most probable. For if the supine posture had been practised, Tertullian ought rather to have used some such word as *attollitur*. This account also, I think, corresponds most naturally with the style of the New Testament.

“ The circumstance of “ being buried with Christ ” determines nothing as to the mode ; for it is well known that the persons whom the apostle addressed, burnt, and did not bury their dead, as we do.

“ What I have hitherto said, all goes on the supposition that the baptismal form in Matthew is authentic. But in proposing both sides of this question, I will conceal nothing that hath occurred to me. It is far then from being admitted by many learned men, that the baptismal form is authentic. Indeed the whole gospel of Matthew has been thought by some judicious men, in the form we now have it, to be spurious. And a person of considerable abilities, and unsuspected integrity, from considerations too minute to enter on here, has not scrupled to say, that some parts of Matthew it is impossible to reconcile with Luke ; that he could produce such internal marks of spuriousness, as it would be impossible to confute ; and

it is much to be desired, that he would bring forward his objections before the public, that they might be admitted or confuted*.

“ However this be, it is certainly too hasty, to say (as Robinson does) that the authenticity of the baptismal form is allowed by all Christians, though this hath also been said by many eminent men. For though it must be admitted, that it is found in all the printed copies and manuscripts, as well as the ancient versions, yet to those who are disposed to doubt its authenticity, the following circumstances must have weight.

“ I have already noted this singular circumstance, viz. that the apostles never baptised in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the phrase is no where else used in the New Testament. Nor is this all: it is not mentioned in any of the writers, called apostolical fathers, (and I have examined every passage where baptism occurs) except in the interpolated epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians†; but as it does not appear in those called genuine, and it appears again in one acknowledged by all parties to be spurious, viz.

* This has since been done in a dissertation, entitled “ The Dissonance of the Gospels.” By John Evanfon, A.M.

† Sect. x.

to the Philippians. This circumstance proves more against it, than if it never made its appearance there at all. It is acknowledged, that it appears in Irenæus and Justin Martyr; but many things are introduced, foreign to baptism, and many doctrines inconsistent with truth. It may also be thought by many very much to resemble the gross interpolation of "the three witnesses*," and to have been made in subservience to some false scheme of doctrine. If to this circumstance be added that in Mark xvi, the corresponding verse †, where baptism is mentioned, is not found, at least, in the most ancient and best manuscripts, and that, in the other two gospels it is not mentioned; it may be thought by some an additional argument, that Socinus and Barclay were not rash in saying, that the apostles baptized with water, without any command from Christ, though these writers did not dispute the authenticity of the text, but only gave it a figurative meaning ‡. A writer, indeed, quoted by Robinson, asserts roundly enough, "*Petrus apostolus formam baptismi a Christo traditam in istam mutabat, Ego te baptizo in nomine domini nostri Jesu Christi*||." This is

* 1. John v. 7.

† See Wettstein.

‡ Socinus de Bapt. and Barclay's Apology for the Quakers' Baptism.

|| Ægidius Carlerius. See Robinson's Hist. of Bapt. p. 41.

making Peter deny his master four times. It may be thought, perhaps, by some, that John baptised in the name of the Messiah, and that the apostles' baptism was nothing but a continuation of that rite. This was the opinion of Tertullian*. As to the perpetuity of this ceremony, the learned historian has certainly brought many cogent arguments in its favour. At the same time many powerful reasons will present themselves incidentally, and unintentionally, yet ingenuously introduced into his work, that wear no favourable aspect on baptism.

“ Having proposed to myself to state both sides of the question relative to baptism, and having previously spoken in high terms of the great expectation formed of Robinson's History†—justice to the subject seemed to require, that I should attend to the force of his arguments, on the side of the perpetuity of this ceremony. These remarks take nothing from the general excellencies of that performance, which, to those who examine it, will be found to contain many curious researches into antiquity, ingenious illustrations of scripture, several articles in a high degree entertaining, and the noblest principles of moderation and liberty.

* Tertulliani Op. p. 229. de Bapt.

† In the Preface to my Inquiry, &c.

It, indeed, is an extraordinary production. This tribute of respect I pay to the abilities of Robinson, not from the partiality of friendship, but as justly due to the labours of a truly ingenious and learned man."

The preceding observations were written in the year 1791. Were I to write my present thoughts on this subject, I should certainly say something more decided. It would, however, lie out of the way of biography, to enter into such disquisitions. The observations are left in their original form as accurate, so far as they go; but the author is no further interested in baptism, than as it concerns matter of historical fact, and of impartial biography.

Some have thought, that the disagreements which took place between him and his brethren, might induce him to pass over too lightly, both in his "History of Baptism," and in his "Ecclesiastical Researches," the history of the English baptists. So it appeared to me on the first perusal. I now think differently: his province was not to treat of modern characters; and though he possessed all the information that could be obtained on the English baptists, he procured but slender documents.

This appears by the following letter from

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J. Thompson, of Clapham, a person, as before observed, well acquainted with the state of the English baptist-churches.

“ SIR,

“ I wish it was in my power to communicate any interesting materials for an History of the English Baptists ; but I have the mortification to repeat to you, what not long since I wrote to Mr. Toulmin, on the same occasion : That my papers furnish little or nothing ~~that~~ can contribute to that purpose, save the number of our congregations, a list of which you have.—The truth is, our churches have unaccountably neglected to preserve any records of the remarkable circumstances of providence relating to them, and of 393 churches in England, scarce one of them can be traced up to its original formation ; when I say this, I mean to except the case of several churches in Leicestershire, and neighbouring parts, that have been formed within these forty years. Their history is so very remarkable, that, without reading any books upon the subject, or having the least converse or knowledge of any of our denomination, when their judgment was settled, they were greatly at a loss for an administrator, and, at last, concluded, that a senior minister, though himself unbaptised,

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should

should baptise one of his brethren, and he the rest. This account you have seen, and, if I mistake not, you have a copy of it; however, as I transcribed and sent it to Mr. Toulmin, I have no doubt, upon your applying to him, he will readily transmit it to you.

“ J. THOMPSON.”

Had I chosen to have further examined the origin and obligation of baptism, it might easily have been shewn that it was practised in the most ancient times, in India; and that several other ceremonies and doctrines, received by many Christians, were religiously embraced, ages before Christianity was known*.

* See Maurice's Indian Antiquities. Vol. v. Ch. iv.

CHAPTER XXII.

Observations on Robinson's Correspondents, in the years 1788, and 1789.

ROBINSON's correspondents, during this period, furnish not such variety of particulars for biographical anecdote, as in former years: for though the letters received by him were numerous, yet they relate more particularly to one subject—History: and the hints which they furnish have either already been made use of; (for, as before observed, several have been brought together, not on account of their connection in the order of time, but of their correspondence in character); or will be rendered unnecessary by the minute account given of our author's historical writings. And, indeed, as the most important transactions of the latter part of his life passed among books, they will be seen to the most advantage in his publications.

The only correspondents, not already mentioned, whose names occur in his papers at this period, are, William Tomkyns, Abingdon, Berkshire; John Hurford Stone, then of Hackney, Middlesex; W. Williams, Cardigan-
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ganhire, South Wales ; D. Brown, Calcutta, in the East-Indies ; and Dr. Charles Stuart, of Edinburgh.

But of his correspondencies in the year 1789, two are particularly interesting, of which a short account shall be here given.

The following passages are extracted from letters written to Robinson from D. Brown, formerly of Magdalen-college, Cambridge, a Calvinistic clergyman of the church of England, a very religious, and apparently a sensible man, with whom, when resident at Cambridge, Robinson was intimate. He was, and I believe still is, chaplain to the garrison of Fort William, Calcutta, and officiated at the Mission church.

Among Robinson's papers is, also, the copy of a plan for a mission into some of the provinces of Bengal, which was communicated to him from Brown. It was presented to Lord Cornwallis, then Governor-General ; whether it was ever realised, I know not.

“ My imperfect knowledge, says Brown, of a great variety of leading facts, will very much cramp my correspondence ; but of one particular branch,—the religious condition of the natives,—I have received considerable information. The

Mahometans make only about a ninth of the inhabitants of Bengal, who are chiefly Hindoos. The Bramin superstition, which it has been the fashion to represent as mild and inoffensive, is, as I have the most convincing evidence, extremely cruel, oppressive, and sanguinary. As a source of depopulation, it is worthy the attention of the legislature:—the burning of the women, which has been supposed a very partial thing, is an extremely common practice. My very learned friend, Mr. William Chambers*, has computed, that about fifty thousand widows are, in these provinces, burnt annually with their husbands. Many of them are young and child-bearing, and might, by second marriages, have been, upon an average, mothers of two children each. The three or four principal wives generally burn; and often the inferiors, compelled by disgrace, and the excessive hardships they are instantly exposed to, follow their example. In some few instances, this appears to be a voluntary act, but the majority are terrified into it."

The whole of this letter is curious, though too long to insert here. The horrid custom † alluded to above, though denied by some to be

* Author of various articles in the Asiatic Researches.

† See an account of it, together with a plate, representing

be now in practice, is too well established to be any longer denied, and is noticed by Robinson in his historical works.

Brown in what follows is speaking of sick persons, who are left on the banks of the Ganges, to be borne away by the overflowing tide:

“ They are (he says) swept away by the returning tide.—Some, however, escape—and as they can never be received back again to their own families, they associate with those, who, like them, have escaped the jaws of death.—There are two villages, not far up the river Hoogly, inhabited solely by those wretched fugitives. They become a separate community, and have children.—The Bramins can, as may serve their interest, devote any sick branch of a family to death. And incredible numbers are made away with by this bloody superstition.—A gentleman told me, as he passed a place called Culna, a little above Calcutta, that he saw a set of Bramins pushing a youth, of about eighteen years of age, into the water, and as they were performing their business of suffocation with mud, he called on them to desist.

sending a view of it, in a publication written by an eye-witness: Hodges's Travels into India, during the years 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783.

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They answered calmly—"It is our custom—it is our custom—he cannot live—our god says he must die." Then the operation went on, till the unhappy youth expired.—This is a fact, and thousands here, of equal barbarity, might be collected.—Such, dear sir, is the Hindoo religion, in some of its fruits. It is full of malignity, and all manner of abominations.—The temples are filled with dancing girls, whose history you know from books. I cannot speak of their detestable rites. The old filthy system of Paganism of Greece and Rome, is, in spirit, the same as that now in being among the Hindoos—and, perhaps, not less polluted, though it be somewhat more retired.—I am ashamed to say, that my eyes have seen what I now testify. But unless I had seen it, my testimony would have been scarcely credible ;—and I never could have spoken with such abhorrence as I now feel.—I am fully convinced, that the Hindoos are without a single moral principle, and that they are extremely cruel and malignant in their tempers.—So deeply corrupt are they in their practices, so tied and bound with chains of prejudice, and so wonderfully are they darkened in their minds, that every remedy must fail, but the knowledge of true religion."

On the back of one of our author's letters is
a curious

a curious observation, extracted from some modern journal, but little known. The place, however, alluded to, must unquestionably be Cannonor, on the Malabar coast, not Patna*.

“ A gentleman, lately returned from the East-Indies, and who was very curious in his observations there, informs us, that some years ago there was a republic of Jews at the city of Patna, the capital of the kingdom of Bahar, who were once so numerous, that they could reckon about 60,000 families, which are now reduced to 4000. They have a synagogue near the Nabob's palace, in which these records are kept, engraven on copper-plates, in Hebrew characters: so that these Jews pretend they can shew their own history from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the present time. The above-mentioned race of Jews declare themselves to be of the tribe of Manasseh, a part whereof was, by orders of that haughty conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, carried to the easternmost province of his large empire, which extended to the Indus, whence these Jews removed to the Ganges; and, this journey, 20,000 of them travelled in three years from their setting out of Babylon. An abstract of

* See the Indian Antiquities, vol. ii. by the ingenious Thomas Maurice, who follows Hamilton.

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their history has been translated from the Hebrew, and may be of service to the learned world."

The other correspondent was Dr. Stuart, a physician of Edinburgh, who engaged in a work, in which he requested Robinson's assistance. It related to the history of the Brownists†, among whom the learned Ainsworth made a conspicuous figure, so far as his oppressors allowed him to be conspicuous. Some points of the history of the Brownists have been inaccurately and superficially treated of by Hume, Mosheim, Macklayne, and particularly by Baylie. Robinson's letters are curious, though to dwell on them here would be tedious.—Two passages, however, shall be quoted, as they rectify some mistakes, and may be of use to persons engaged in this part of history. Robinson writes to Dr. Stuart, as follows:

"I think you have very properly characterised Baylie. He is not to be trusted: for some of his pretended facts are not true; and his reasoning from them, suppose they were true, is jejune and inconclusive. He reports hearsays of "gracious ministers;" but if grace

† For an account of Robert Browne, the founder of this sect, see Biog. Brit.—Robinson furnished many materials for that article.

be not an habit of speaking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I hold it an unmeaning word, standing for nothing in an evidence. Grace with Baylie was zeal for presbyterian tyranny; and inspire a man with that, and you instantly put to death impartiality and moderation, essential qualities in an historian.

“ The rise of Brownism, I think, ought to be placed before 1570, the thirteenth of Elizabeth; for George Gyffard, “ minister of God’s word at Maldon,” who published his “ Plaine Declaration that our Brownists be full Donatists,” has these words, page 1, 2. “ Now there is a sect in England, commonly called Brownists, because Browne was the first original of it; but, for all that, he hath written and published bookes in maintainance and enlargement thereof, and with more skill and learning, than others which either as yet have followed, or gone before him. Many men thinke, that they be sprung up but of late; but whereas, in very deede, it is well knowne, that there was a church of them in London twenty years past, and one Bolton was a principal doer therein, whose fearful end is not forgotten.” John Smyth said, in 1609, “ Popery had the prescription of a thousand years against Calvin, but Calvin hath not had the prescription of
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one hundred years against the separation, nay I suppose not above fifty years." From Smyth I infer, that the Brownists themselves did not certainly know the date of their own rise; and from Gyffard I infer, that they may be, at least, dated 1570, when they were a church. I imagine Brownism originated among the poor and illiterate, and that their obscurity protected them."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Review of Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches.

DURING the last year of his life, our author pursued no new speculations, and attempted few compositions. The whole of the volume on Baptism, except the Preface, and Recapitulation at the end, were completed before that period, and was originally intended as an introduction to a larger undertaking. The latter has since appeared under the title of "Ecclesiastical Researches." These were our author's two favourite works, and to the severe application, with which he engaged in them, he fell an untimely sacrifice.

Besides those depressions, that proceed from a constitution, broken by intense study, and hastening to decay, he evidently laboured under some concealed distress, that consumed his spirits. Many of his former friends too hastily conceived it to proceed from the alteration of his religious sentiments, from the loss of popularity, from secret chagrin, and unacknowledged vexations. But such are unquestionably mistaken. His popularity was rather more widely extending, if it declined in a particular circle:

circle: and, on this account, he possessed cause for triumph; none for mortification.

Such as recollect, that Robinson had a family, numerous and grown up—an income, slender and precarious—an heart, overflowing with benevolent sympathies, and generous wishes,—that, by the uncertainty of human events, he was separated from several of his former friends, and, in fine, that his domestic affairs were critically circumstanced; such may find various reasons for his distress, inartificial and natural, without conjuring up imaginary distresses, superstitious dreams, and divine visitations, the horrors of desertion, and the gloom of melancholy. He was inwardly and insensibly languishing for several months before he died; and expired suddenly in his bed, at Birmingham, in 1790, having been invited to preach there for Dr. Priestley. On this affecting subject more will be said in the succeeding chapter: for though his Ecclesiastical Researches were not published till after his death, it seems more in order to devote the following chapter to this elaborate work.

The following review and critique were written by me, for one of the periodical monthly journals, and printed several years ago: and as it contains a better display of the work than I should,

should, perhaps, give at present, no apology will be necessary for introducing it on this occasion. A few additions, however, are made ; and the notes of authorities inserted.

“ Ecclesiastical history has been too long in the hands of some reigning party, so as to have led many to doubt whether this branch of literature has been treated with impartiality, or is, indeed, of any considerable importance. On the discovery of bigotry, they suspected want of integrity ; and amid the display of selfish passions, they looked in vain for those characters, which dignify history. The character of the church, they have said, is a character of meanness, or ecclesiastics have not been faithful historians. The present volume will, probably, elucidate this matter, and lead to the source of some mistakes, into which mankind have been hurried. This work is introduced with (chap i.) “Cautions necessary to a reader of ecclesiastical history.” The first regards words, “which, the author observes, affect historical precision, both singly and in conjunction.” This remark is exemplified in the words catholic, Christian, heresy, council, barbarian, baptism, schism, church, bishop, deacon, canon, and sacrament, which have been used by historians, losing sight of the original meaning, in

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the senses affixed to them in their own communities; by an inattention to which distinction, the ear has been beguiled by sound, and the attention led off from truth. The second caution regards contradiction. Some have been studious to reconcile contradictions, rather than to suppose historians guilty of known falsehoods. The third caution regards epithets, and false colouring, which mislead by an injudicious application of terms. The fourth regards rhetoric, by which writers, in their similitudes and splendid descriptions, have misinterpreted passages of scripture. The fifth regards attestation. Some tales, the author observes, are absolutely impossible,—others improbable,—some manifestly false,—others, though true, of nothing to the purpose. Caution the sixth regards spurious writings.

“The observations relative to the first and second cautions are illustrated by references to the following authors:—Gerard John Vossius*, Ludovicus Antonius Muratori†, Sanctus Gregorius‡, and Fredegarius; the venerable Bede§,

* De Historicis Latinis, lib. ii. cap. xxx.

† Rerum Italarum Scriptorum variorum Collectio. Ejusdem Antiquitates Ital. Medii Ævi.

‡ S. GREGORII Turonensis Episc. opera et FREDEGARII Epitome et Chronic. cum suis continuatoribus, et aliis Antiq. Monumentis, ex edit. Theodor. Ruinart.

§ BEDÆ Hist. Eccles.

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Sandius,

Sandius*, Sigonius†, Schottus‡, Saenz D'Aguirre§, Pacianus, Cave, Valesius||, Dr. Allix, Dr. King, Dr. Lardner¶, Theodoricus**, Benedictus††, Bonizon‡‡, Julian§§, Godofridus|||, Le Clerc¶¶, Dr. Geddes***.

“The third and fourth cautions are illustrated from Cyprian†††, and Le Clerc‡‡‡. The fifth and sixth, from Epiphanius§§§, Muratori||||, Johan Bale¶¶¶, Lardner****, Captain Cook††††, and Turner‡‡‡‡.

* CH. CHR. SANDII Nucleus Hist. Eccles.

† De Regno Italiæ.

‡ Andrea Schotti Hispania Illustrat.

§ Joh. Saenz d'Aguirre Concil. Hispan. Collectio.

|| HADRIANI VALESII Hist. Franc. apud eundem.—

Dr. Allix's History of the Churches of Piedmont.—Dr. King's Rites of the Greek Church.

¶ History of the Heretics of the two first Centuries, book i. sect. ii.

** THEODORICI Regis Edict. Præf.

†† BENEDICTI Presb. Vita DAMASI.

‡‡ Bonizonis Episc. Sutrinus Libel. de Sacramentis.

§§ Julian. Imp. op. Cæsares. Καὶ Παλιν Εὐχος.

||| GODOFRID. VITERB.

¶¶ Io. CLERICI Ars Critica, cap. xiv.

*** DR. MICHAEL GEDDES' Misc. Tracts vol. ii.

††† CYPRIANUS De Unitate Ecclesiæ, N. 15.

‡‡‡ Jo. CLERICI Art. Critic. cap. xv.

§§§ EPIPHANII Hæres. xxvi.

|||| Antiq. Ital. tom. iii. diff. xlv. p. 927.

¶¶¶ JOHAN BALE Mysterye of Iniquitye, MDXLI.

**** Sect. xiii. Basilides.

†††† Voyage towards the South Pole, vol. i. ch. v.

‡‡‡‡ R. Turner on the Calumnies of the primitive Christians.

This volume is properly entitled "Ecclesiastical Researches." But the reader, who should conclude it relates merely to doctrines or councils, to ministers or persecutions, would form a very inadequate notion of its merit. The author is led in these Researches into different countries, and different governments;—Judæa, Greece, Africa, Rome, Spain, Navarre, and Biscay, the States of Italy, the vallies of Piedmont, Bohemia, Munster, Poland, Transylvania. In the several chapters, each describing a particular nation, are found many ingenious remarks on the geography, government, laws, antiquities, commerce, and natural productions of the country, as well as on the manners, and characters of the inhabitants. The author, however, by no means, loses sight of the leading object of his enquiries, or offers violence to the character of an ecclesiastical historian. We here present our readers with a specimen of our author's manner in this respect.

Chapter the second offers a general view of the Roman empire, at the birth of Jesus Christ, p. 12.

"Before we enter," says this learned man, "into the particular subject of the volume, which is ecclesiastical history, it cannot be improper or uninstruative to take a transient view,

both of the state of the Roman empire and Judæa, at the birth of the Messiah.

“The ancient Roman empire was a most magnificent object. It exceeded, in length, above three thousand miles, from the river Euphrates in the east, to the western ocean. In breadth it was more than two thousand miles; and the whole consisted of above sixteen hundred thousand square miles. This vast extent was divided into provinces, and within it were contained Spain, Gaul, the greater part of Britain, Italy, Rhætia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Mœsia, Dacia, Thrace, Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Phœnicia, Palestine, Egypt, Africa, and the Mediterranean with its islands. This extended territory lay between the twenty-fourth, and fifty-sixth degree of northern latitude, and the most desirable part of the temperate zone, and in general produced all the conveniences and luxuries of life*.

“An object of such amazing magnitude presents to the eye a vast assemblage of materials, each considerable in different views, and all replete with information. The chief article now to be observed, is, the original principle of go-

* Rollin's Roman History.—Hooke's Roman History.
—Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

vernment; for historians, ancient and modern, have remarked, that through all the various changes of the modes of governing at Rome, the primary institutes of the policy of Romulus were the bases on which the whole fabric, in all its forms, was erected*. Under all the fine tales of the first Roman fabulists, and the glossy colouring of their last orators, it is too evident, that enthusiasm and injustice were the principles on which the whole mighty empire rose; enthusiasm, for the founders pretended a divine commission; and injustice, for, leaving arts and sciences to others, they made the government of the world the sole possession of the state†. These stamina of government, from small beginnings, therefore, may be traced through a regular series of personal quarrels, domestic broils, skirmishes with their neighbours, conquest of provinces, and civil wars, to absolute empire vested in one single man. The story begins with Romulus and Remus, twin brothers, one of whom acquired the absolute mastery over the little village of Rome, by consulting gods, and putting his brother to death; and it proceeds to Cæsar, whose ambition of absolute dominion caused the death of a million of the human species, as well as his

* Rollin. Preface to vol. i.

† Ciceron. *Tusc. Quæst.* iv. 1.—Hooke, vol. i. b. i. c. i. v. ch. ii. 1.—VIRG. *ÆNEID.* vi.

own assassination. Him Augustus succeeded; and during his reign, and the reign of a few of his successors, pomp and prosperity held imperial power in awe; but in due time, the same lust of dominion that had extended the empire, caused the decline and fall of it. The empire was increased by a love of dominion over foreigners, and when there were no more foreigners to subdue, it was diminished and destroyed by a lust of power over one another; and in both, the dread of modern free governments, a standing army, was the palladium of the state. The military establishment, while Rome was in the summit of power, consisted of more than four hundred and fifty thousand men: a military power, as an elegant modern writer has observed, which, however formidable it may seem, was equalled by a monarch of the last century, (Lewis XIV.) whose kingdom was confined within a single province of the Roman empire*."

Robinson then proceeds to consider the number of the inhabitants, their policy as conquerors, and governors, their religion, and ministers of sacred things,—the curetes,—flamens,—celeres,—augurs,—vestals,—falii,—feciales, and pontiffs.

In like manner, in chapter iii. which pre-

* Gibbon, vol. i. chap. i.

sents a general view of Judæa at the birth of Jesus Christ, he considers the extent of its territory : its history and government ; and the six-fold division of its history, patriarchal, mosaical, regal, servile, royal-pontifical, and provincial : of each period he gives an elaborate account.

He then, in chapter iv. takes a view of the new œconomy introduced by John the Baptist, and the state of the world at the time of its introduction, adding some reflections on the character of John. That our readers may form an idea of our author's style and general manner, we proceed to lay before him a few extracts from the body of the work. The following curious passage (chapter vi. p. 42.) is taken from the history of the Greek church.

“ The author of the Alexandrian or Paschal Chronicle, who wrote about the middle of the fourth century, says, in the year thirty-nine, the evangelist Mark preached the word of Christ to the people of Alexandria, and first formed a church there, over which he presided two and twenty years*. An annalist of after times, says, in the fourth year of Domitian,

* *Chronicon Paschale, seu Chronic. Alexandrin. cur. et stud. Dufresne.*

the first pontiff, or high-priest of the Church of Alexandria, the immediate successor of Mark the apostle, being dead, Abilius succeeded him, and became the second bishop of Alexandria*. This is an amendment: but who, or what was this first pontiff of the noble city of Alexandria, who had the honour to precede Abilius, and to succeed the holy apostle St. Mark? It seems he was high-priest of a cobbler's stall. The story is, and it is not improbable, that Mark had the misfortune, as he was walking along a street of Alexandria, to burst the stitching of his shoe, so that he could not proceed till it was repaired†. The nearest cobbler was the man. He mended the shoe, or sandal, or whatever it was. This brought them acquainted. The man was taught the gospel by St. Mark, and being a man of good abilities, he taught others; and this was the first pontiff of Alexandria, that is, the first regular teacher of a few poor people at Alexandria, who, peradventure, had no other cathedral than a garret. A teacher of a primitive congregation in Alexandria is not to be confounded with a patriarch of Alexandria. . . . The Christian Greek orators go far beyond the his-

* Joannis Zonaræ Annales, cura et studio Dufresne.

† Eutychii Patriarch. Alexandrin. Eccles. Origines, cum commentar. Joan. Selden.—Abrahami Eckellenis Responsio ad Seldeni Comment.—Jaques Bafnage Hist. Eccles.

torians, and are the most dangerous of all men, and the least to be trusted in historical facts. The facts at bottom are true, but they are so expressed, as to include a great deal of falsehood. It is not worth while to transcribe an oration, but history taken from the oratory of one would read in this manner*: “The glory of Ignatius appears by five observations. 1st. On the extent of his bishoprick.—2ndly. The dignity of his electors.—3rdly. The difficulty of the times, in which he governed the church of Antioch.—4thly. The throne on which St. Peter sat. And lastly, the power of Jesus, who committed this church to his care. St. Ignatius, the archbishop of Antioch, was intrusted by Jesus Christ, with the government of a see, containing two hundred thousand inhabitants. If it be difficult to govern fifty or an hundred men, what eminence of wisdom and virtue must he possess, who governed a church of two hundred thousand! This prelate illuminated all Syria; like the sun, he rose in the East, and set in the West.” The fact is this: Ignatius was one honest good man of a congregation of several other men as honest and good as himself; for the first churches were all saints†. This man was born

* S. Johannis Chrysostomi Op. ex editione Bernardi de Montfaucon.

† Jaques Bafnage. Hist. Eccles. tom. i. liv. iii. ch. ii.

in the East, and died at Rome. He lived some time at Antioch, a city containing two hundred thousand inhabitants, all whom he governed, exactly as, in the reign of Charles the Second, Jeremiah Ives, who kept a cheesemonger's shop at the corner of New-street, and taught an anabaptist congregation in the Old Jewry, governed the city of London*. He illuminated all the East, that is, during his life, no body out of Antioch knew him; but after his death, some body published a letter in his name, which, for his honour, ought to be supposed a forgery. He was an archbishop; but he had no bishops under him; and his congregation all assembled in one house during his life, and the lives of his successors, for more than one hundred and fifty years after his time†. In this manner do the Greek fathers relate facts; and so much did this kind of narration take with the populace, that they named the man, who from the pulpit filled the city of Constantinople with such grand ideas, John the Golden-mouth, or, in modern style, Saint John Chrysostom. Some historians transcribe what these fathers published for oratory, and give it the world as true history. Others, on the con-

* A Slap to a Lying Pamphlet falsely called Truth's Plea for Infants, lately published by Mr. ALEXANDER KEL-LIE, by JEREMIAH IVES, cheesemonger.

† Basnage, ubi sup. f. x.

trary, tax them with uttering wilful falsehoods. It should seem that there is a bottom of truth in the facts; and the deception lies in the high-flown oratorical fashion of reporting them. The eloquence of the ancient Greeks was chaste, that of the age of the fathers prostituted. As Christians happened to live, and tell their tale, when this bad fashion prevailed, they, without any intention to deceive, complied with the fashion, and so disguised the fact."

Speaking in the same chapter of the events that followed the first establishment of a school in Alexandria, he remarks as follows, p. 52:

"Some Christians foresaw the mischief, which this school would produce, and remonstrated against it: but they soon sunk into neglect, and contempt. Time, however, hath discovered, that their fears were not groundless; for from this intoxicated house proceeded, in a regular train, most of the evils that have since afflicted the church. Having laid down a double sense of scripture, as a first principle, all the rest followed of course. The four gospels became hard books, and common Christians could not find out the meaning, for that lay in the mystical sense: consequently, the aid of the school became necessary to inform them. In proportion as academics taught

taught in the churches, and were applauded, unphilosophical and illiterate teachers were slighted. The title and dignity of philosophers delighted so much these vain men, that they always appeared in the philosopher's cloak, so that a man, able to teach, was instantly known by his habit. The modest plain people retired, and kept at a distance. Some churches chose these superior geniusses, to teach them constantly, and called them from the school, to settle among themselves, and they returned the favour by introducing mysteries from which proceeded first disputes, and then councils of men of their own order to settle them.

“About the year one hundred and fifty, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, first made use of the word, Trinity, to express what divines call persons in the Godhead: on which Mosheim, and after him good Dr. King, makes this just reflection, “The Christian church is very little obliged to him for his invention. The use of this and other unscriptural terms, to which men attach either no ideas, or false ones, has destroyed charity and peace, without promoting truth or knowledge*.” It has produced heresies of the worst kind.

* Mosheim's Chronological Tables. Cent. ii.—Dr. King's Rites of the Greek church. p. 7.

“Every

“ Every effect, produced by these causes, became itself the cause of another effect. Every church had its *hairefis*, or opinion, and it became of consequence to determine which was the right: for each teacher maintained his own with a great degree of gravity and obstinacy, which such a good man would not have done, if it had not been of the last importance to the salvation of his flock. To settle, then, the right *hairefis*, it was necessary for the churches to form a council of delegates; and who so proper to be elected as the bishop, the only one in the church, who understood the subject, and knew how to defend it? In these assemblies, delegated bishops perfected themselves in the art of wrangling, acquired a tone of authority, and practised airs of self-importance and dominion. Here, too, for order sake, it was necessary to appoint a chairman; and him time metamorphosed into an arch or head-bishop, and him again into a metropolitan, and the metropolitan again into a patriarch. Here, then, Christians lost their liberties. Here delegates became first the masters, and then the tyrants of the people. Here they determined their own *hairefis*, or heresy, to be the right opinion, or, as they called it, orthodoxy, and the opinions of others, to be only mere opinions unsupported by any learned arguments, and condemned to oblivion by the council, that is,

said

said they, by the whole church, which Jesus purchased with his own precious blood. It was an enormous compliment, that these gentlemen paid themselves. "The gospel," said they, "is evidently divine, because nothing but the miraculous power of God could support it in the hands of illiterate men." As if they and their quirks were, to all succeeding ages, to supply the place of the miraculous power of God, &c.

Opinionists*, or, to use the Greek style, heretics, paid no regard to all this: they formed churches, taught their own doctrines, and held separate assemblies every where. There were some, as the Nazarenes and Ebionites, harmless people, who mixed the rites of Moses, or the traditions of the elders, with the institutes of Jesus: there were others, as the Marcionites, the Valentinians, the Carpocratians, and the Basilidians, who mixed the oriental philosophy with the doctrines of the gospel; and there were others, as the Montanists, who despised literature, and whose rigid discipline was tinged with enthusiasm. There was Hermogenes, a painter; Hierax, a bookseller,

* Dr. Lardner's History of the Heretics of the Two First Centuries.—Thomæ Ittigii de Hæresibus Ævi Apostol.—Johannis Damasceni Op.—Photii Bibliot.

and

and great numbers more, who followed their own convictions ; taught churches, and probably were men of more zeal, than that most numerous party, who called themselves the catholic and orthodox church, and who calumniated all the rest, as heretics, who troubled the peace of Israel. It ought not to pass unnoticed, that the learned Platonists “ held it as a maxim that it was not only lawful, but even praise-worthy to deceive, and even to use the expedient of a lie, in order to advance the cause of truth and piety. The Jews, who had lived in Egypt, had learned and received this maxim before the coming of Christ, as appeared incontestably from a multitude of ancient records: and Christians were infested by both these*.

Of the Euchites in the Greek Church, he observes, p. 58. 59, “ This general parent-stock called Euchites, or dissenters, it should seem, was divided and subdivided by the clergy, into various classes of heretics. They misrepresented their doctrines, blackened their characters, and, as often as they could, excited princes to persecute them. This was the meaning of the artist, who drew the emperor Andronicus as a horse, with a bridle in his mouth, and Arsenius the patriarch riding on him, with the

* Mosheim, as above, p. 11. Cent. 2. chap. iii. sect. 15.
reins

reins in his hand*. Some of these dissenters dogmatized, as the established clergy did, and they became Manichean, Arian, and Athanasian Euchites. Others were named after the countries where they most abounded, as Bulgarians, Macedonians, Armenians, Phrygians, Cataphrygians, Galatians, Philippopolitans, or Popolicans. Others were named after some eminent teacher, as Paulicians, and Paulianists, from Paul of Samosata, or, says the princess Comnena, from Paul and John, the sons of Callinices. Novatians, Donatists, Artemonites, and many more, were of this class. Monarchian shocked the ear of an emperor, who knew no king but Cæsar. Melchisedecian terrified priests, who knew no order of priesthood, but their own. Bogomilian blistered the populace, who hated the thought of praying for themselves: a simple Euchite, therefore, was a mere nonconformist, in Greece. A Manichean Euchite was a dissenter of a doctrinal disputatious turn: and so of the rest; if, indeed, the words had any precise meaning at all, which contradictory accounts render very doubtful†. It would require the labour of a life, to investigate, disen-

* Nicephori Gregoræ Hist. Byzant. Parisiis 1702. lib. viii. de Athanasio Patriarcha.

† Johannis Cantacuzeni Hist. lib. ii. cap. xxxix. de Basilaano Monacho.

tangle, and elucidate the history of heretics: but every body knows, nothing is easier than to pick heresy out of any book, not excepting the wisest of all books, the scripture. Sometimes, it is said, they rejected some books of scripture: that is, they were critics.

“ Is a man the less virtuous, for refusing to believe Solomon's Song divine? They are generally taxed with great crimes: but, is it credible, that vicious characters could do what they did, or suffer what they suffered? Why were they not punished for these crimes, and not burnt for opinions? The truth is, they would not be governed in religion by any thing, except their own convictions. There is not a single heresy laid to the charge of these blasted characters, which might not, with the utmost ease, be charged on the orthodox. Can any thing be more horribly Manichean, than to worship the devil? But had the works of St. Gregory Nazianzen been destroyed, and the titles only of his poems come down to posterity, what might not have been said of such a list as this?

“ A copy of verses addressed to God,—another to Christ,—a third to his own soul,—a fourth

fourth to the devil,—a fifth to the same,” and so on*.”

In the history of Africa, Augustine is spoken of in the following terms, chap. 7. page 102.

“From this bitter and bloody fanatic of Africa, proceeded two hundred and thirty-two pamphlets, an innumerable multitude of epistles, expositions of the gospel, and the psalter, besides sermons, or homilies; and by this man’s writings, did Luther, Œcolampadius, and other reformers expound the scripture, and frame an ecclesiastical constitution, to lead Europe into purity of faith and manners; as if Punic faith, and African manners, execrable at Rome, when Rome was pagan, were fit for ages enlightened by philosophy and religion†. Instead of improving by all the great men that have lived in the last two thousand years, should the world continue to be the disciples of Austin, and his spiritual sense of scripture? He understood the ten commandments in a spiritual sense, and “thou shalt not kill,” signified, thou shalt not kill an orthodox believer. The command did not protect the life of an

* S. Gregorii Nazianz. Op. tom. ii. Parisiis. 1680. Carmen Iambic. xvii, *εἰς Διαβολὴν*.

† Eman. A Schelfstrate Eccles. African. Diss. iv. cap. iv.—Melch. Adami Vita Lutheri.—Pellicani Vita.

heretic. This man and his maxims blasted the character of christianity, and excited in the minds of many of the most liberal of mankind, just suspicions of the divinity of the religion of Jesus; for the christianity that Austin taught was the scourge and the curse of the empire. If Jesus employed him, as he affirmed, to teach occult grace and penal sanctions, for not believing with, and even against evidence; the shame retreats from the obedient disciple, Austin, and revolves on his master, Jesus: but far, very far from every heart be such a thought! It is impossible to defend both Jesus, and Austin, and justice requires the sacrifice of the latter."

Chapter X.—In the history of Navarre and Biscay, the author, after giving, in his usual manner, a description of the country, and government, inquires into the origin of the Waldenses, presents a small sketch of their manners, general principles, and mode of inculcating them, and answers some difficult questions relative to their character. He narrates the history of Servetus, and exposes the persecutions which he experienced from the reformers, more particularly from Calvin, which ended at last in his death. The leading sentiments of Servetus are unfolded to the reader, with part of a letter from Calvin, convicting him

him of Servetus's death. The following is Mr. Robinson's opinion of the term Valdenses, and presents the distinguishing feature of a people, who have been described by very different and opposite characters, by Christians of different denominations (p. 309). "The country of Vallenfes, called Valles, was the most beautiful and fruitful that can be imagined. It was filled with villas, towns, and inhabitants, begirt all round with mountains, and abounding with corn, olives, pines, and vineyards, enriching the vallies, embellishing the hills, and impregnating the air with effluvia of the most salutiferous kind: it was about twenty-eight miles long, and sixteen broad*. The ruins of some Roman towns yet remain. At the foot of a cliff, called Mombui, are the caldes, or hot wells, which are now disused, but the steps remain, and there are gratulatory inscriptions of Romans, who recovered their health by bathing, by drinking the waters, and by the salubrity of the air. There is in this country one town, called Sabadell; and Mombui, just mentioned, perhaps took its name, as another place near Barcelona did, from its having been the residence of the Jews. The natives founded it Monjui, Jews hill. In the twelfth century, many rich Jews had landed

* P. De Marca Lim. Hispan. lib. ii. cap. xvi. f. 11.

estates not far from this place. That the people called Waldenses and Sabbatati originally inhabited this district, is the most probable of all conjectures: the first, a corruption of Caldenses, or the inhabitants about the hot wells, or Vallenges, the natives of the country; and the last, from Sabadell, one of the towns. Accident might give the same names to others; but these appear to be the only persons, in whom all the characters of the first Waldenses meet. It is not pretended, that the Piedmontese were not inhabitants of vallies: it is only observed, that they were not such inhabitants of vallies, as old ecclesiastical history describes.

“ Little did the old Waldenses think, when they were held in universal abhorrence, and committed every where to the flames, that a time would come, when the honour of a connexion with them would be disputed by different parties, of the highest reputation. So it happened, however, at the reformation; and every reformed church put in its claim*; that of the Bohemian brethren will be examined in Bohemia; that of the Piedmontese, in Italy; that

* *Matth. Flacci Illyrici Confessio Waldensium.*—*Balthasar. Lydii Waldensis*, tom. i.—*Jacobi Usseri de Christ. Eccles. Successione*, cap. viii.—*Alex upon the Ancient Churches of Piedmont.*—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies*, vol. iii.

of the Albigenses, in France ; and, at present, it shall suffice to observe of these, that, in general, the claim of each is just, and, if properly limited, true ; but there is one distinguishing character of the original Waldenses, which none of these had, or had but faintly, and which eminently discriminated the people, first called by this name.

“The distinguishing feature of the primitive Waldenses is the doctrine and practice of **CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**. The orthodox positively affirm, “ they were not guilty of Manichæism ; ” — “ yes, (replies the learned Limborch, than whom no man knew their history better) they were many of them Manichæans. It is not fair, (adds he) to deny a fact, which is as clear as noon-day*.”

Chapter XI.—In the history of the church of Italy are several interesting particulars relative to its revolutions and ecclesiastical history ; to the state of religious liberty, which, our author observes, was enjoyed for a long period in the greater part of Italy ; and to the futility of the terms, unity, and universality of the church. The following is the character of the great Theodoric, who founded the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy, (page 370). Theodoric was

* Hist. Inquisit. lib. 1.

a fine figure in his person*. His manners, acquired in his childhood at the polite court of Constantinople, were elegant and easy, at once displaying the dignity of his rank, and the goodness of his heart. He had not a tincture of literature; it was not the fashion of the times: but he had a great fund of natural sense, an exquisite taste for the arts, and was a patron of the sciences and learned men; he was free from the vices of the princes of his age, and, in all cases, he discovered a sound understanding, and a love of virtue. He was deeply versed in the politics of the times, and conducted all his affairs with the Greeks, the Romans, and the Goths, so as to preserve peace, the glory of a statesman. He went into Italy with the knowledge and consent of the lawful emperor, and took upon him the government, not only with the approbation of the emperor, but with that of the senate of Rome. His valour was never doubted; but, after his throne was established, he never took up arms, except in case of necessity, and always out of Italy†. His munificence was splendid, but wise. He erected many public buildings, and, says an exquisite judge, “nothing is more remote from Gothicism, than all

* Ennodii Panegy.

† Mascov. Hist. of the Ancient Germans, vol. ii. book xi. sect. vi.

the monuments of this king of the Ostrogoths*." His court was the seat of western magnificence, and his chancellor, Cassiodorus, whose writings remain, is called by the French the Fontenelle of his age†. He was a sincere lover of liberty. He preserved it among all his own subjects by an administration of equal justice. He obtained it for foreigners, in their states, by negotiation. He acquired it for slaves, by methods just and generous; and at one time he redeemed six thousand captives from the Burgundians. He wanted nothing of an emperor, but the title, and that was in his power. This is the man, whom providence sent to bless the western world, as prophets had been anciently sent to the Jews, to guide them into the paths of peace. The catholics, like the Jews, never knew the worth of such a messenger of good. Orthodoxy, not liberty—hierarchy, not social happiness—ritual worship, and not virtue, were their objects: to obtain these, they conspired against him during his life, and since his departure they hand his name down to posterity, from book to book, under the odious appellation of Arian—anabaptist—persecutor—enemy

* Grossley, Italy, vol. i. Ravenna.—Rubei Hist. Rav. —Spicileg. Ravennatis Hist. apud Murator. tom. i.

† Magni Aurelii Cassiodori, variar. lib. xii.—G. J. Vossii de Historicis Latinis, lib. ii. cap. xix.

of God—blasphemer of Christ—oppressor of the saints—an Agrippa—an Herod—a barbarian—and so on*.”

In the Chapter that respects the vallies of Piedmont, he rectifies several mistakes, into which catholic and protestant writers have fallen, particularly relative to the Vallenfes, Waldenfes, or Vaudois, as they call themselves from vaux, or vallies.

In the history of Bohemia, Chap. XIII. the reader is presented with an account of the reformation, introduced by John Hufs and Jerome of Prague—with the anabaptistical errors of these reformers, and their condemnation by the council of Constance, together with an account of that council—the history of the Taborites—the persecutions of the baptists—and some remarks on the effects which the old feudal tenures had on liberty. This chapter concludes with a short sketch of the history of the Moravian baptists.

Chapter XIV.—As the history of the Munster baptists, according to our learned author, has been misrepresented and vilified, he goes back to a period, prior to the disorders that

* Vigiliū Papæ Epist. ad Eutherium.

happened

happened in that city: to ascertain their cause, he gives an interesting view of the feudal system, which had such prevalence in Germany. He then relates the grievous hardships, which, in the sixteenth century, oppressed the Germans—the events which encouraged the peasants in an attempt to obtain their freedom—the insurrections of the peasants, and of others, all over Germany—and gives an account of the famous Muncer, with his manifesto in behalf of the peasants*.

Chapter XV.—On the history of Poland (which afforded the fairest example of what lay nearest his heart, religious liberty) our historian seems to have dwelt with peculiar pleasure, and to have exerted his best talents.—The reformation gained ground in this country during the long reign of Sigismund, and was carried on, amidst some interruptions, under Sigismund Augustus, who succeeded him: what follows is so much to the purpose, that we make no apology for quoting it at large.—Our author had been speaking of Prince Nicholas Radzivil, first cousin to the queen, palatine of Vilna, marshal and chancellor of Li-

* Johan. Angel. Werdenhagen de Repub. Hanseaticis, p. i. c. v.—Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. Cent. xvi. f. 1. 22.—Hume's Hist. of England, vol. ii.—Robertson's Hist. Charles V. vol. i.

thuania, one of the most illustrious men in Europe, who encouraged the reformation in Poland, p. 563.—“ The conversion of Prince Christopher Radzivil, (continues he) cousin to Nicholas, and brother to the queen, is so singular, so well attested, and so much to the purpose, that it would be improper to omit it. This gentleman, being extremely sorry that a prince of his family embraced that religion, went to Rome, and paid all imaginable honours to the pope. The Roman pontiff, being also desirous of gratifying him in a peculiar manner, gave him, at his departure, a box filled with relics. Being returned to his house, and the news of these relics being spread abroad, certain friars, some months after, came and told this prince, that a man was possessed with the devil, who had been exorcised to no purpose: they, therefore, besought him, for the sake of the unhappy wretch, to lend them the precious relics which he had brought from Rome. The prince granted them very readily; upon which they were carried to church in solemn pomp; the monks all going in procession on that occasion. At last they were laid on the altar; and, on the day appointed, a numberless multitude of people flocked to this show. After the usual exorcisms, the relics were applied. At that very instant, the pretended evil spirit came out of the body of the man, with the usual

usual postures and grimaces. Every one cried out, "A miracle!" and the prince lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, to return thanks for bringing home so holy a thing, which performed such miracles. But some days after, as he was in that transport of admiration and joy, and was bestowing the highest eulogiums on the virtue of these relics, he observed, that a young gentleman of his household, who had the keeping of that rich treasure, began to smile and make certain gestures, which shewed he only laughed at his words. The Prince flew in a passion, and would know the reason of his derision. A promise being made to the gentleman that no harm should be done him, he declared secretly to the prince, that, "in their return from Rome, he had lost the box of relics, which had been given him to keep, and that, not daring to divulge this, for fear of punishment, he had found means to get one like it, which he had filled with the little bones of beasts, and such trifles as resembled the relics he had lost: that seeing so much honour was paid to that vile heap of filth, and that they even ascribed to it the virtue of driving away devils, he had just cause to wonder at it." The prince believed this to be true, and nevertheless, being desirous of getting further light into this imposture, he sent for the monks the very next day, and desired them to inquire, whether

whether there were any more demoniacs, who wanted the assistance of his relics.

“ A few days after they brought him another man possessed with an evil spirit, who acted the same part with him who had appeared before. The prince commanded him to be exorcised in his presence ; but, as all the exorcisms which are usually employed on those occasions proved ineffectual, he ordered that man to stay in his palace the next day, and bade the monks withdraw. After they were gone, he put the demoniac among his Tartarian grooms, who, pursuant to the order that had been given them, first exhorted him to confess the cheat ; but, as he persisted obstinately in it, still making his furious and dreadful gestures, six of them chastised him so severely with rods and scourges, that he was obliged to implore the prince’s mercy, who pardoned him the instant he had confessed the truth. The next morning the king sent for the friars, when the wretch in question, throwing himself at his feet, protested that he was not possessed, and had never been so.

“ The monks, at first, besought the prince not to believe this, saying, that it was an artifice of the devil, who spake through that man’s mouth : but the prince answered, that if the

Tartarians had been able to force the devil to tell truth, they would also be able to extort it from the mouth of these friars. Now these monks, seeing themselves put to it in this manner, confessed the imposture, saying, that they had done all this with a good intention, and to check the progress of heresy. But the prince offered up his hearty prayers to God, for having been so gracious as to discover such an imposture; and now entertaining a suspicion of a religion, which was defended by such diabolical practices, though they went by the name of pious frauds, said, that he would no longer depend on any person for his salvation, and thereupon began to read the scriptures with unparalleled assiduity. In six months, all which he spent in reading and prayer, he made a wonderful progress in piety, and in the knowledge and mystery of the gospel. After which, he himself, with his whole family, professed his religion in fifteen hundred and sixty-four*."—Cardinal Hosius, and others attempted to interrupt the progress of the reformation in Poland: it however still continued to gain ground. King Sigismund himself secretly encouraged it, being instructed in theology, by Lismaninus, provincial of the Franciscan friars, and confessor to the queen's mother; and in civil polity, by the celebrated

* Bayle's General Dictionary, article, Nicholas Radziwil, note (e).

Fricz, the king's secretary, who at the command of the king published his famous treatise, "De emendandâ Republicâ."

The reformation was still farther promoted by several distinguished persons at Pinckzow, and the Bible was published, under the patronage of prince Radzivil, in the Polish language. The baptists, however, were for several years exposed to persecution, both from catholics and protestants. The king appointed a synod to settle differences: but the delegates came to no agreement. The venerable Philipowski was impeached, and the baptists met in two synods, to sign an agreement.

Andrew Dudith Sbardellati was so strenuous an assertor of liberty in the baptist church in Poland, of such distinguished talents and merit, and is yet so little known in England, that we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of presenting our readers with his history and character, p. 591.—"Andrew Dudith Sbardellati was the son of Jerome Dudith, a privy-counsellor of Ladislaus, king of Hungary, and a noble Venetian lady of the family of Sbardellati. He was born at a family-castle, near Buda, in Hungary, in February, thirty-three (some say thirty-seven). His father dying while he was very young, his uncle, who was archbishop

bishop of Strigonia, perceiving he had all the talents necessary to make a great man, took care of his education. He was sent to Breslaw, then to Padua, and from thence to Paris, whence he returned home highly accomplished in literary and polite acquirements, and celebrated for his eloquence and virtue. He came into England with Cardinal Pole, whose life, written by Beccatelli, he published a few years after, in elegant Latin, with emendations, and additions, and a well-written preface. His youth and modesty induced him to submit it to Binardus, before it went to press. Next he went into Italy, and published some classical criticisms, which were greatly esteemed by the learned. Soon after he went to France, and the duke of Florence having given him recommendatory letters to Catharine of Medicis, he complimented her so politely in the Italian tongue, that she could not help saying, "she thought it impossible for an Hungarian to speak Italian with so much ease and elegance." Every where admired and applauded, he went to the emperor's court, at Vienna, and, in sixty-one, Ferdinand nominated him bishop of Tinia, in Croatia, and sent him ambassador to Sigismund, king of Poland. By the emperor and the clergy of Hungary, he was appointed their delegate to the council of Trent, where he made an oration in favour of the marriage of the clergy,

and another for the cup of the Lord's supper to be administered to the laity. He spoke with so much eloquence, that the legates wrote to cardinal Borromei, that though the orator had taken up time devoted to other business, yet the council was so charmed with him, that they did not perceive it, and had never heard any thing like it. The pope, afraid of his powers, got the emperor to recall him. Ferdinand did so: but having heard Dudith's account of what passed in the council, he approved of his conduct, and rewarded him with the bishopric of Chonat, and soon after with that of *Quinque Ecclesiæ*, or, Five-Churches. Hence he returned into Poland, and continued ambassador from the emperor. During his residence here, offended with the immorality of courts, and the fopperies and superstitions of the church, he condescended to read the writings of Blandrata and Davidis, two noted anti-trinitarian baptists; and from them he received his ideas of religion, and became an heretic, though he never saw them. He resigned all his preferments, married lady Sophia Strassi, and, after her death, a second lady, of the family of Zborowsky, and settled at Cracow, among the Calvinists. The Pope excommunicated him, but he treated his anathema with contempt; for the emperor, for political reasons, continued to protect him. He was well acquainted with several branches of philosophy

philosophy and the mathematics, with the sciences of physic, history, theology, and the civil law. He copied Cicero three times over with his own hand. He had something majestic in his face, and in the air of his countenance, though he was singularly modest, and bashful as a lady. His life was regular and virtuous—his manners elegant and easy—and his benevolence warm and active. This character is almost all taken from those who considered him as an heretic*:—in what terms would those who knew him best describe him?

“ The liberal sentiments of Philipowski met the hearty approbation of Dudith : for he had laid it down as a maxim, that there was no sin in a mere misconception of the mind, and hence he inferred that men might think differently without injury to their virtue,—that conscience ought to be left uncontrouled, and that no punishment should be inflicted on pretended heretics. “ It was this principle,” says the continuator of Fleury, “ that led him among the unitarians ; for there,” adds he, “ he might say what he would on every subject.” On this affair he wrote to Wolff, a divine at Zurich, to Beza and others, soon after this interview with Philipowski. In his letters he desires the Swiss divines, in their

* Fleury, Hist. Eccles. tom. xxxii.—Sandius.—Thuanus, &c.

future epistles to him, to omit the pompous prelatical titles, which he had laid aside with popery; but which they were so unacquainted with the world as to continue to give him in their addresſes. He laments the condition of the reformed in Poland, “ which,” ſays he, “ reſembles the chaos of the poets, heat and cold, wet and dry, contending for maſtery,” and which he attributes in a great meaſure to their inflammatory letters. He endeavours to convince his correſpondents that there is no ſuch thing in any of their churches, as uniformity of faith, and that it is not in the power of man to produce it. He laughs at their creeds, and ſays, “ They deſerve not to be called confeſſions, but confuſions.” He ſhews the folly of appealing to fathers and councils, and the abſurdity as well as injuſtice of capital puniſhments. “ Tell me,” ſays he to Wolff, “ my learned friend, now that the Calviniſts have burnt Servetus, and beheaded Gentilis, and murdered many others, having baniſhed Bernard Ochin, with his wife and children, from your city, in the depth of a ſharp winter; now that the Lutherans have expelled Laſco, with the congregation of foreigners, that came out of England with him, in an extremely rigorous ſeaſon of the year; having done a great many ſuch exploits, all contrary to the genius of Chriſtianity; How, I aſk, how ſhall we meet the papiſts?—With what face can we tax them
with

with cruelty?—How dare we say, “ Our weapons are not carnal ? ” —How can we any longer urge, “ Let both grow together till the harvest ? ” —Let us cease to boast, that faith cannot be compelled, and that conscience ought to be free *.”

“ Never was a finer pen than that of Dudith. With all the penetration of a man, who thoroughly understood the artifices of ecclesiastical politicians, with all the powers of wit, argument, learning, and liberality of sentiment, he addressed, I wish we could add, and disarmed, the godly persecutors at Zurich and Geneva. “ You contend,” says he to Beza, “ that scripture is a perfect rule of faith and practice ; but you are all divided about the sense of scripture, and you have not settled who shall be judge. You say one thing—Stancarus, another. You quote scripture—he quotes scripture. You reason—he reasons. You require me to believe you. I respect you—but why should I trust you rather than Stancarus ? You say he is an heretic—but the papists say you are both heretics. Shall I believe them ? They quote historians and fathers—so do you. To whom do you all address yourselves ? Where is the judge ? You say the spirits of

* Socini Opera, tom. i.—Andreas Dudicii, Johan. Wolfii, Theodor. Bezae, &c. Epistolæ.

the prophets are subject to the prophets—but you say I am no prophet—and I say you are not one. Who is to be judge? I love liberty as well as you—you have broken off your yoke, allow me to break mine. Having freed yourselves from the tyranny of popish prelates, why do you turn ecclesiastical tyrants yourselves, and treat others with barbarity and cruelty, for only doing what you set them an example to do? You contend that your lay hearers, the magistrates, and not you, are to be blamed, for it is they that banish and burn for heresy. I know you make this excuse; but tell me, have you not instilled such principles into their ears? Have they done any thing more than put in practice the doctrine that you taught them? Have you not told them how glorious it was to defend the faith? Have you not been the constant panegyrists of such princes as have depopulated whole districts for heresy? Do you not daily teach that they who appeal from your confessions to scripture, ought to be punished by the secular power? It is impossible for you to deny this. Does not all the world know, that you are a set of demagogues, or (to speak more mildly) a sort of tribunes, and that the magistrates do nothing but exhibit in public, what you teach in private? You try to justify the banishment of Ochin, and the execution of others,—and you seem to wish Po-

land would follow your example. God forbid ! When you talk of your Augsbuurg-confession, and your Helvetic creed, and your unanimity, and your fundamental truths, I keep thinking of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Farewell, most learned and respected Beza. Take what I have said in good part, and continue your friendship to me." This is only a sketch of a letter: but these hints may serve to shew the temper and turn of the man. The Genevan and Swiss divines did not reason thus: they called the pernicious practices which Dudith condemns, "healing the wounds of the church."—The character of Socinus, in this chapter, is well drawn, and the influence which he had in promoting a liberal turn of thinking among the baptists.

This volume is a valuable supplement to the history of baptism. . . . To those who value that performance, this, we doubt not, will be highly acceptable. It is, however, by no means to be considered as a second volume of that work, it not being necessarily connected with it. That presented complete the history of the ceremony, with many valuable articles connected with it; this, a history of facts and of men, with a few incidental remarks on baptism; and it is in our opinion more interesting, and, in the main, better written than the former volume.

From the specimens already produced, it must also appear, that this history is not a mere narrative of religious sentiments. The author was evidently an unitarian in oppositon to an Athanasian. It makes, however, no part of his design, to bring forward any favourite system of religion. In describing the history of various churches, the Greek, African, Roman, and Italian, he applies the term unitarian indifferently to what we now call Arian and Socinian. If he sometimes expresses himself severely against catholicism and orthodoxy, so called, in the Roman and other churches, it is because he finds them too often in connection with intolerance. He seems to consider heresy more in reference to conduct than doctrine, and has frequent occasion to assert, with the excellent foreign lawyer, Boehmer *, the innocence of mere mental error, and the friendly discipline of the first Christian churches.

“ It will, no doubt, be thought by some, that our author’s zeal in opposing such, as assumed an undue authority in the Christian world during the early ages, and such, as in subsequent periods persecuted on account of religion, leads him sometimes to under-rate their abilities. To Augustine, the African, for example, Robinson gives no quarter ; he speaks of him both in

* Boehmer. Jus Eccles.

this history, and that of baptism, as a fanatic, an enthusiast, a profligate schoolmaster, "who, after having picked up a few scraps of learning at Carthage, teaches what little he knew of grammar and rhetoric, at Togaste and Carthage." Unquestionably he was enthusiastic, but, at the same time, he possessed superior talents, and made considerable acquirements. To the truth of this assertion, his book *De Civitate Dei* yields undoubted testimony. Notwithstanding this, the reader will recollect the part taken by Augustine, in establishing a gross system of religion, and in exciting civil magistrates to persecute such as differed from him in theological opinions. Bayle, Le Clerc, Voltaire*, and others, are equally severe against him as a bigot and a persecutor; and even his admirers must admit that he laboured under violent prejudices; that he propagated many absurd opinions; that his reasonings are inconclusive, and his interpretations of scripture fanciful; that he introduced a false system of logic into the schools; and that, under the sanction of his name, the scholastic philosophy

* See particularly Bayle's General Dictionary; Life of Augustine;—and Le Clerc's Letter to a friend in England, prefixed to the English translation of his Supplement to Dr. Hammond's Paraphrase;—and Voltaire's Treatise on Toleration; Postscript.

obtained a dangerous pre-eminence in the middle ages*.

In exposing intolerance, our author shews no partiality to favourite characters: whether he traces its steps to Calvin, to Beza, or to Socinus, men, whose talents, on other accounts, he is ever forward to admire, intolerance never meets with quarter from Robinson. We cannot forbear observing, that, in the history of Poland, he has, by no means, accurately † stated the grounds, or characterised the peculiarities of Socinianism; nor given the true reason for the unpopularity of the doctrine.

Though several coarse and inelegant expressions occur in this volume, it notwithstanding displays great command of language, perspicuity and splendour of description, strength and dignity of sentiment. To the praise of learning, industry, and originality, it is certainly entitled. In just notions of government, and of religious liberty, it, perhaps, is not surpassed.

This history, as before hinted, though all

* See Enfield's History of Philosophy, vol. ii. drawn up from Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*.

† Ecclesiastical Researches, ch. xv. Vid. Socini Op. inter Fratres Polonos.

written

written before his death, was not published till after. Notwithstanding some blemishes, I have not the shadow of a doubt, that it affords more original information, by far, on many topics, than any ecclesiastical history in our language. Had some Right Reverend Warburton produced as able a performance in defence of ecclesiastical hierarchies, as this dissenting minister has in favour of nonconformity, what splendid encomiums would it have obtained from the priesthood*! But a prelate supporting the church, and a dissenter undermining it, are very different characters. The former appears like the sun in its meridian lustre: the last is viewed under an eclipse†.

* It is not intended to intimate, that this work has not been highly commended; but to criminate the fulsome panegyrics on such systems of sophistry as "The Alliance." Francis Plowden, in his late learned work, "Church and State, or an Enquiry into the Origin, Nature, and Extent of Ecclesiastical and Civil Authority, with Reference to the British Constitution," proves "The Alliance" a farrago of erudition and ignorance, of faith and infidelity.

† — Λογος γαρ εκτ' αδοξουντων ιων,
Και των δοκουντων, αυτος ου τ' αυτο σβειν.

Eurip. Hecuba, v. 290.

The same discourse obtains not equal praise,
Advanc'd by Non-cons, and Right Reverend Priests.

C H A P-

CHAPTER XXIV.

*Robinson's Death;—Review of his Character;—
Monody on his Death;—and Testimonies to his
distinguished Merit.*

WE now come to the closing scene of this
great man's life ;

The port of calms, that state of ease,
From the rough rage of swelling seas.

DR. PARNELL.

It has already been hinted, that Robinson died at Birmingham. Having been for some time in a declining and dejected state, it was hoped, by his family, that a journey to this place, and an interview with Dr. Priestley, which he had long desired, would have proved beneficial to his health and spirits. The physician approved the intended journey, though, on account of the present languor of his patient, he wished it to be deferred. On Wednesday, June 2, he set off from Chesterton, and travelling by slow stages, in an open chaise, on Saturday evening he arrived at Birmingham. This was in the summer of 1790.

It does not appear, that he entertained any apprehension of his approaching dissolution,

when at Birmingham, though he felt himself a different man from former times; for to one introduced to him, he addressed himself in this singular manner, "You are only come to see the shadow of Robert Robinson." Notwithstanding, he ventured to preach twice on the Sunday,—at the new-meeting, in the morning, and in the evening, at the old. Dr. Priestley was charmed with his facetiousness in conversation (for his sprightliness he seems to have retained to the last), but confessed himself much disappointed with his preaching. "His discourse," he says, "was unconnected and desultory; and his manner of treating the trinity favoured rather of burlesque, than serious reasoning. He attacked," continues this ingenious and learned man, "orthodoxy more pointedly and sarcastically, than I ever did in my life."

The truth is, Robinson was now a dying man: his bodily strength was exhausted—his intellectual faculties were weakened and impaired:—but retaining still his secret dislike against the rigid notions of bigots, and addressing a congregation, with whom, in many points, he seemed to have accorded in sentiment, he gave the freest scope to his opinions, and, perhaps, wished to recommend himself to his new friends. Be this as it may, the impression left on Dr. Priestley's

Priestley's mind, both by his conversation and preaching, was, that Robinson was of the unitarian faith, and had received considerable light from his own theological writings.

On the Monday evening he was seized with great difficulty of breathing, a complaint with which he had some time been troubled; but on Tuesday he diverted the company with his usual vivacity, and appeared not to think himself in danger: at night he ate his supper with a good appetite, and retired to rest without the least complaint. Of death Robinson was not afraid: but the act of parting with his family and friends always appeared to him very distressing, because afflictive to such as were left behind. Hence it was, that he often expressed a wish to die "softly, suddenly, and alone." On Tuesday morning he was found dead in his bed: and as the clothes were not the least discomposed, nor his features distorted, it is probable, that this great and amiable man expired exactly as he wished.

He died at Showell-Green, near Birmingham, in the house of William Russell, the respected friend of Dr. Priestley, at the age of fifty-four years, and eight months: and was interred by that worthy man, in the dissenters' burying-ground, at Birmingham, with every token of affectionate

affectionate respect; and in that pulpit, from which Robert Robinson but a week before addressed a numerous congregation, Dr. Priestley preached his funeral sermon.

It is the usual practice to treasure up in the memory the dying words of eminent persons, as testimonies to their last sentiments, or future expectations. But, in the present instance, the reader must pursue his own reflections. That he possessed some sentiments in common with unitarians, appears from his last publication; but the truth is, he could not be tied down to creeds of any kind, and the limits of his faith cannot be ascertained. From his whole appearance a considerable time before his death, the presumption is, that he fell asleep like a sickly child, that sighed for repose. The following imperfect tribute of respect to a beloved friend shall be subjoined.

Monody on the Death of Robert Robinson.

* * The author, having been engaged in literary pursuits that had somewhat impaired his health, was unbending his mind at a friend's seat in Huntingdonshire, by attempting an ode adapted to the season of the year, June. This was meant to have been connected with that on spring. In this employment he was interrupted

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ed by receiving intelligence of the death of
Mr. Robinson *.

I.

Touch'd by the glowing year,
Wake to life, Æolian strings!
Wild music floats upon the liquid air,
Still the gay garden smiles, the painted meadow sings.
In Hammond's bow'r at ease reclin'd,
Thus late I sooth'd my weary mind;
Till busy thought, and fancy gay,
Seem'd to take their holiday.
And there I wove the flow'rs of song.
And must I drop th' unfinish'd wreath?
Or strew it wild the tombs among,
Wither'd by the blast of death?
Adieu, ye laurels ever gay, adieu!
A mourner sad, I go to court the baleful yew.

II.

And, oh! thou dreary shade,
Receive again thy trembling guest †!
Yea solemn regions of the silent dead,
Find me some secret charm to soothe the suff'ring breast.
For ah! in vain I turn my eyes
To blooming groves and smiling skies.
Faint is the garden's gayest bloom;
Faint all the myrtle's rich perfume;
And faint thy beams, oh! sacred light!
Dearer to me the lonesome gloom,
Where the pale empress of the night
Silters o'er the moss-grown tomb.
For there remembrance oft shall love to stray,
To bid the friend repose, to bless my Theron's clay.

* See my Poems; Odes, and Elegies.

† Alludes to the death of Julia Robinson.

III.

As in the lonely vale
 The modest primrose droops and dies,
 Or by the pathless hedge, the violet pale,
 So gentle Theron droop'd, so breath'd his dying sighs.
 No tender comfort's aid was near;
 No children caught the parting pray'r;
 No friend received the last request;
 No friend the closing eye-lid press'd;
 'Mid the deep silence of the night
 Softly the genial heat retir'd,
 And from his eyes recedes the light,
 As the lamp of life expir'd.
 Vain hope! how didst thou fan thy treach'rous fires,
 False as th' inconstant flame that sparkles and expires.

IV.

Yet patient let me bend,
 And praise Jehovah while I weep;
 Truth may I find, and dying gain a friend:
 Like Theron may I live, then gently fall asleep.
 For not to barbarous regions borne,
 By bigot hands his limbs were torn,
 Nor were the last sad rites unpaid,
 Nor sleeps he with the vulgar dead:
 The sons of freedom o'er his bier
 Hung in attentive silence lost;
 Dropt o'er his grave the generous tear,
 And precious held his dust;
 And, the last offering paid at truth's fair shrine,
 Theron shall wake to life, and own the truth divine.

V.

High on the topmost bough
 Of virtue's ever smiling tree,
 There grows a flower, that once in Eden blew,
 By mortal sight, ah! seldom reach'd,—fair charity!

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Higher

Higher and higher may I soar,
 Climb the fair tree, and crop the flower:
 And deep within the troubled breast
 Plant the heavenly blooming guest.
 It's sacred sweets should soothe me more,
 When wrongs oppress, and grief invades,
 Than could Arabia's spicy shore,
 Or soft Italian shades.
 If mortal hand e'er crop this flower divine
 To plant it in his breast, it was, my Theron, thine.

VI.

But say, hath heaven in vain
 The generous soul with freedom fir'd?
 Still o'er their tombs shall the pale Muse complain,
 Whom virtue warm'd, and love of honest fame inspir'd?
 Ah no! their honour'd names are blest;
 In peace their sacred ashes rest;
 And oft the grateful Muse shall roam
 To drop a garland on their tomb;
 And brighter still their sun shall rise
 When Time his transient course hath run,
 O'er boundless fields and cloudless skies,
 And keep a constant noon;
 Where the fair tree of life for ever blows,
 And the pure stream of bliss, for ever, ever flows.

VII.

Sweet fields of vivid light!
 Where storms no more succeed to peace,
 Nor toil to rest, nor day retires for night;
 But all is light, and love, and life, and boundless bliss!
 The sons of freedom there shall meet,
 There Virtue keep her peaceful seat;
 Conflict no more with shame and pain,
 Nor toiling seem to toil in vain;

Unfallied

Unfullied glories deck her brow ;
 Unceasing songs her triumphs tell ;
 There with fresh ardor shall she glow ;
 With Truth immortal dwell ;
 No tyrant there molest the happy plain,
 But boundless Freedom hold an everlasting reign *.

Thus lived, and thus died Robert Robinson, a man, who from an humble station in life raised himself to considerable notice ; whose benign disposition, and gentle manners, entitle him to the character of an amiable man ; whose genius, whose learning, whose steady opposition to every species of tyranny, as well among protestant dissenters, as established hierarchies, entitle him to the character of a great man.

The reader will perceive that an attempt has been made, in the preceding biographical sketch, to make facts, incidental occurrences, anecdotes, and published writings, relieve the tediousness of narrative, and the solemnity of remark, to elucidate ambiguity of character, by private correspondence, and thus to let Robinson become, as much as might be, his own biographer. Several of the letters introduced are in themselves curious, and, from adventitious circumstances, rendered still more interesting. As, probably, many of my readers will be among his personal acquaintance, they will have the truest

* This ode is left nearly as written at the time: had I composed it now, several things in it would have been altered.

criterion by which to determine his character. To some of his more intimate friends, indeed, already acquainted with his writings, this method may appear tedious: but these memoirs likewise address themselves to many who were not his friends,—who never even heard of his name. A character so distinguished and so various, as the present, affords materials for much speculation, and invites an attention beyond the circle of private friendship.

The memoirs of individuals, no less than of society at large, are the history of facts, and of rights. From settled customs and existing manners, we learn the state of society,—from actions and habits, the character of man.

It becomes the moralist to advance, as the biographer retires. He examines facts,—deduces consequences,—suffers impartial judgment to follow the order of events; he ponders actions, circumstances, situation, temperament; and in proportion as the right and truth of character preponderate, assigns a proportionate praise or censure. Biography should be the unfolding of conduct, not a display of epithets,—unbiaſſed by party, and unyielding even to the partiality of friendship. The biographer should keep the line of truth. What philosopher will not agree with La Bruyere, “ That no man
should

should continue writing, who prefers his private gratification to the public good, and a zeal for promoting truth?"

Some persons consider the rank of a dissenting minister of the greatest importance to the interest of individuals, and to the progress of society: they surround it every where with superlatives: like the Roman orator approaching it with the language of *incredibilis*, *insuperabilis*, and *supremus*; or like the Romish doctors, with *angelicus*, *seraphicus*, *supercœlestis*, *divinus*:—others consider it as a kind of humiliating character, obscured by unfortunate situation, and scarcely capable of being rendered important: while others think it possesses a qualified nature, apt to be over-rated by the admiration of party, and undervalued in more dignified and polite circles. The philosopher is superior to such partialities: he keeps aloof from distinctions, is not easily hurried away by extravagance. He collects the peculiarities of situation, whether fortunate or adverse, in which he finds a person,—traces the features of worth, and intellect,—and from the aggregate, fixes the character of the MAN. All adventitious characters must be resolved into individual worth: and, in such an estimate, what avails, whether the hero be a churchman or a dissenter, a preacher or a player?

Should such a person trace in Robinson, from very early years, generous dispositions, a modest deportment, a propensity to admire, to esteem, to imitate, worth and industry, and to acquire knowledge, he will not scruple to say, that he possessed a disposition favourable to virtue, and required only an advantageous situation to arrive at eminence.

If, in future life, he find him placed in a promising soil, and cultivating it by patience, by attention, by observation, by beneficence; gathering information, and, as it were, inviting knowledge; relieving the labour of study by active duties, and active duties by successive studies; if he behold him surrounded by necessities, yet not insensible of his comforts, or indifferent to the distresses of others; if he see him the delight of all around him, and yet by useful talents, rendered almost necessary to thousands; if he see him prattling with children, guiding persons in the outset of life, advising some in the progress, and comforting others in the decline; disseminating such principles of liberty among the lowest ranks of society, as lift men into a sense of their dignity; if he observe him still further extending his sphere of usefulness, varying his employments, and under all gaining esteem and admiration; if, while he discharged many with talents, he should behold him
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in any one outstripping all competitors, then need he not fear to esteem, nor the author blush to admire, the character of Robinson.

“ But he had failings:”—that is saying, he was a man. The egotist and the hypocrite are among the first to cry out for failings, and corruptions; the first because he flatters none but himself; the last, because, though the world thinks him a saint, he yet knows himself to be a knave, and thinks ill of all mankind. There appears truth in a saying of Rousseau’s “ that men are bad, but man is good ;” and to egotists and hypocrites may be addressed, what Robinson once said to a coxcomb, flandering a great man, “ Take away nine parts out of ten of that character, and there remains a greater man than thou art.”

“ Robinson was a vain man.”—Vanity is either the vice of little minds, or the foible of great minds, weakened by excessive admiration. If consciousness of superior powers, if to love the praise of good men, if the desire of fame, constitute a vain man, it shall be admitted that Robinson was not without vanity. If his situation nursed these passions, could he help that? The observation of that man who said, “ he was too proud to be vain,” will, how-

ever, in a considerable degree, apply to Robinson.

O! ye admiring assemblies; ye who offer incense to your ministers;—who acquaint them with all your private wants, and secret faults, and from their lips, derive all your present comfort and future expectations;—who unfold to them all your difficulties, and receive from them all your supports;—ye spoil the best characters, and complain they are not perfect!

I see the reason why popular preachers are in danger of being the vainest men alive. One who ought to know, observed, that “the pulpit is a place of eminence, in which heads not duly poised, are in danger of turning giddy*.”
—Strong heads turn giddy in a pulpit.

Notwithstanding the conclusions that may be drawn from these apparent concessions, Robinson was a man of humility. I leave casuists to settle this apparent contradiction. They have reconciled greater.

“Robinson was an ironical man.” The ingenious Grecian†, who wrote the Moral Cha-

* See Fordyce’s Art of Preaching.

† Theophrastus, Eth. Charact. Περὶ Εἰρωνείας.

acters,

acters, defines irony, " the framing of words and actions to base and sinister ends."

It belongs to such an one to address his enemy as his friend, and to commend those whom he intends to ruin: to those who utter reproaches against him he feels indifference, and those who insult him, he approaches with the language of respect. Robinson was the reverse of all this. He could scarcely overlook an insult, or endure neglect: he intended the good of all men, but never, designedly, injured a worm.

Consider again his situation, though not as a preacher, dictating from a tribune, liable to no inquisitive interruptions, or impertinent replies; but as a teacher of morals,—the village pastor,—the casuist,—the interpreter of knotty points,—the arbitrator of trifling disputes between theological wranglers. Hapless situation for a man of sagacity! when perhaps the dispute is, which is the most glorious way for the God of mercy to crack a flea. Robinson would sometimes look grave, weigh the arguments on both sides, and reply as follows: " Brother, when I consider the weighty arguments produced by you, I incline to your side of the question: and, brother, (addressing the other) when

when I consider the weight of yours, I lean to your side : but who is sufficient for these things ? Be good men ; your salvation depends neither on your sentiments, nor my explanations." What shall I say ? he would perhaps say afterwards : " Good men ! neither of them was a conjuror ; —and neither to be convinced by me."

" Robinson was a flatterer : " that he understood the art of complimenting, and was not insensible to admiration, hath already been confessed : though perhaps the language in which this confession was made, was too broad and conceding. Before we affix to his name an opprobrious appellation, let the different parts of his character be collected, and the circumstances of his situation be considered. Let us conceive a man of superior talents, placed in an inferior situation, engaged in frequent intercourse, and united by religious attachment, to persons of slender conceptions, as well as generous dispositions ; to bigots, to enthusiasts, to superstitious and credulous pietists *, as well as to liberal inquirers, and candid, sin-

* This observation was certainly not directed to the dissenting congregation at Cambridge, nor indeed to any particular *congregation*, but to *individuals* of any religious society whom it may suit. Robinson had an extensive connection with persons of different religions.

cere believers; a man whose benevolence inclined him not only to endure, but to correct, the bad propensities of mankind; to liberalise the youthful mind; to smoothe the decline of life, by consolatory promises, and agreeable expectations; to unfold his bosom with all the confidence of friendship, and all the forbearance of universal benevolence: before the practice of such a man be confounded with that "base intercourse in common life, which seeks only private utility*," the distinction so admirably drawn by Plutarch, between a friend and a flatterer, should be weighed. Two passages from this incomparable treatise, therefore, shall be presented to the reader†.

"And as on the one hand we do not applaud such thoughtless and inconsiderate conduct, so on the other we cannot admire that over-nice and cautious disposition, which measuring friendship only by gravity of deportment and utility, concludes that a pleasant and cheerful companion is instantly to be deemed a parasite: for a friend is not a morose unsociable animal, nor is friendship venerable only in a severe austerity of manners; but its very gra-

* See Theophrasti Eth. Charact. Περὶ Κολακείας.

† Plutarch's Treatise upon the Distinction between a Friend and Flatterer, with Remarks, by Thomas Northmore, M. A. F. S. A.

vity and venerable deportment are pleasing and desirable ;

Near it the Graces and sweet Love have fixt.
Their chearful habitations—

“ Nor indeed, as Euripides observes, is the unfortunate man alone

Pleased to meet with friendship's soothing eye :

but it increases no less the pleasures and happiness of those who are in prosperity, than it diminishes the griefs and sorrows of the afflicted in adversity. And as the philosopher Evenus used to say, “ that fire was the best seasoning ;” so the Almighty, having blended the sweets of friendship with our condition upon earth, hath rendered every thing, when she is present and partakes of it, lovely and agreeable. For how is it possible that the flatterer could put on the mask of pleasantry, if he saw not true friendship cloathed in sweetness? But as gilt and counterfeit vessels imitate the brightness only and splendour of real gold ; so the flatterer imitating the sweetness and pleasantry of the friend, always shews himself chearful and obliging, and never resists or opposes the gratification of our wishes.”

“ But we may observe another distinction in
the

the resemblance he bears to a friend ; for a true friend neither praises nor imitates the actions of another indiscriminately, but such only as are truly laudable. According to Sophocles,

His nature does not lead him servilely
To copy out your enmity and hate,
But to partake your friendships and your love ;

and indeed to accompany you only in the paths of rectitude and virtue, not in the ways of vice and error ; unless, like some contagious diseases of the eyes, the infection should spread and he should insensibly contract some ill habit by reason of his familiarity and intercourse. As, they say, the companions of Plato learnt to imitate his gibbous shoulders ; of Aristotle, his stammering ; and of Alexander, the inclination of his neck and roughness of his voice : for some people are apt unwittingly to imbibe many bad habits from the lives and manners of their friends. But the flatterer evidently resembles the *chamæleon*, which changes itself to every colour but white ; for being unable to emulate those virtues which are alone worthy his emulation, he takes care to let no vice or imperfection escape him. And as bad painters, who have not skill enough to express the finer touches of beauty, confine their likenesses to wrinkles, spots and scars ; so the flatterer imitates your intemperance, superstition, irascibility,

irascibility, harshness to servants, and mistrust of your familiars and relations ; for he is by his own nature prone to ill, and fancies, that by copying your vices he is far removed from the appearance of censuring them. For they surely have more the semblance of an enemy, who are ever urging the reformation of their friends, and seem to be dissatisfied with, and full of indignation at, their faults ; such conduct as this lost Dion the favour of Dionysius, Samius that of Philip, and Cleomenes that of Ptolemy, and ended in their ruin ; but flatterers, being desirous of appearing as well agreeable companions, as faithful friends, pretend, on account of the violence of their affection, to be disgusted not even at your vices, but in every respect to labour under the same natural infirmities and passions as yourself."

It must, however, be acknowledged, that one of Robinson's pliant genius, and professional character, may easily be betrayed into extravagant language and indefensible declarations.

" Robinson was a violent partisan, furious with the spirit of proselytism."—This objection, it seems, has been frequently urged to those worthy women, his generous patronesses during his life-time*, and who, as they understood his worth, revere his memory.

* See p. 124 of these Memoirs.

Robinson was rather the herald of liberty, than a preaching dogmatist, or a spouter for a party: he loved to see crowded auditories, it is true: but he could address half a dozen persons with ingenuity, affection, and pathos. A zealous opposer of tyranny, however, civil, as well as religious, may be indulged in a little earnestness; and where he does not force his sentiments, he may be allowed to recommend them. Zeal for the minutiae of any sectarian principles Robinson had for many years outgrown. Such only as had the intellectual vigour and resolution to form their own tenets, were the converts, by whom he wished to be followed and admired. Robinson was ambitious, it must be granted, to make profelytes of this description; but not to form Trinitarians, Unitarians, Calvinists, or Baptists.

In the same liberty of sentiment, that he allowed others, he seems to have indulged himself. Many persons have objected to him, that he disguised his real sentiments: and hence the difficulty of answering the question, Where did he settle at last?

To speak freely, it seems a part less liable to ambiguity, and less subject to contradiction, to consider him, at the close of life, as a man of literature, than as a divine: as to

his precise character in the last respect, it is safer to say what he was not, than what he was. He was not a bigot—he was not an enthusiast—he was not a superstitious man—he was not a Calvinist—he was not a trinitarian—and some express doubts, with respect to his confession to Dr. Priestley, “that he was indebted to him for the little he knew of rational defensible Christianity:” we ought, at least, to be on our guard against a conclusion too general and too determinate. That he had read many of that great man’s writings, and held several sentiments in common with him, is undoubtedly true; but how far he believed his system, it would be very difficult to determine. Robinson admired the talents and learning of Dr. Priestley; but he was too much in the habit of paying respectful compliments. A declaration similar to that made to Dr. Priestley, he also made to the learned Robert Tyrwhitt, of Jesus’-college, as well as to others. This insinuation is not intended to rescue Robinson from the regions of heresy, but to leave him more particularly distinguished by his prominent feature of character,—love of religious liberty.

In regard to the importance, in which he considered baptism—even there, some may entertain a degree of hesitation. When he wrote his two admirable histories, he was unquestionably

questionably a sincere baptist: but when it is recollected that the whole was written nearly a year before his decease, a person who doubts, whether he supposed baptism so important, as he did originally, should not be charged with illiberality. As to the worth of baptism, it stands or falls by its own weight. What it appeared in Robinson's estimation, is quite another consideration. In one of his letters to a friend*, there occurs some such singular exclamation, as the following:—"I became a baptist on principle, and now I am ashamed of my party!" It must, indeed, be confessed, that this speech might in some measure be forced from him by feelings of strong and ill-timed indignation against individuals: but Robinson, for a considerable time before his death, shewed not only an indifference, but a degree of manifest reluctance towards the practice of this ceremony. He evidently seemed to consider it as a burden, rather than a delight; and though the history of this ceremony has been narrated by him with more ingenuity and learning, than by any other historian, yet the chapter on its perpetuity, written probably several years before his death, is feeble and unsatisfactory, if not declamatory, and evasive. Let the baptists continue in the practice of what they think a divine institute. They are left in the un-

* Mary Hays.

disturbed possession of all the arguments with which reason, scripture, or antiquity can furnish them. But in making this closing remark, more respect is due to the general interest of the rising generation, than to that of any particular party. There is one caution with which I would impress the youthful mind, “not to be lavish of their confidence in great names;” even learned authorities, quoted with all the precision of chapter and verse, and urged with the zeal, perhaps with the impetuosity and violence of belief, should not settle their judgments, nor regulate their conclusions. They must not be shocked to be told, that numerous instances occur of men who have written in the support of systems, which they at length outgrew, and that many ingenious and learned men have found it easier to defend their old tenets, than to believe them. Hence it has happened, that, in the dissenting, as well as established churches, the very men, who are now appealed to, as the standards of what is called orthodoxy, died in the belief of what is supposed heresy; and some of our most learned critics have not been the firmest believers. —Reader, speaking of Robert Robinson, say not of him, “he believed this tenet, or disbelieved the other;” for, perhaps, there may exist persons who may think themselves qualified to contradict thee. —Say rather of him, “he was an amiable, a benevolent, a generous,

a learned man; a true philanthropist, an invariable friend to liberty." That assertion no man living will be able to confute.

It may be proper to add, that the amplest testimonies to the abilities, learning, and virtues of Robert Robinson, may be found in the writings of persons of various denominations: but the reader is more particularly referred to the three funeral sermons published on occasion of his death*, and the biographical sketch of him in the Scotch Encyclopædia †, each written by men of very respectable talents, and of different religious persuasions.

A passage from each of these writers shall be submitted to the reader. Dr. Priestley, amidst other encomiums, that he passes on him, observes as follows:—

"He was a wonderful example of a man rising to considerable eminence by his own exertions. His education was no other than that of a grammar-school, and his first serious turn was given to him by the preaching of Mr. Whitfield. But he gradually devoted himself wholly to the work of the ministry

* By Dr. Priestley, Dr. Rees, and Dr. Toulmin.

† Scotch Encyclopædia, volume xvi. Article, Robinson.

among the baptists; and in the discharge of the duties of it, especially in his labours among the lower ranks of people, he greatly distinguished himself. What you saw and heard of him here would give you no idea of what he had been. For the disorder to which he had been more than a year subject, and which, it is said, was brought on by intense, and I may say intemperate, application to study, had weakened his mind, as well as his body, and, as is always the case, much more than he was himself aware of; though he still retained a fluency of speech, and a command of language, that few can boast. When he was in his prime, he used, without any art, or ostentation of oratory, perfectly to command the attention of his audience; and, always speaking extempore, he could vary his style and address according to his hearers, in a manner that was truly wonderful. His writings discover equal powers of imagination, and of judgment. His sermons, preached in the villages near Cambridge, are remarkable for their plainness and propriety. But at the time that they were composed, he had not acquired all the sentiments that he had before he died.

“What most of all distinguished Mr. Robinson was his earnest love of truth, and his laborious search after it. Educated in Calvinistic prin-

principles, he was the greatest part of his life very zealous in the propagation of them. I myself remember hearing him many years ago explaining the Calvinistic doctrine of justification to a crowded and very attentive audience in London. Mr. Lindsey's resignation of his living in the church of England, and his writings in defence of unitarianism, exciting a good deal of attention, Mr. Robinson published a book entitled "A Plea for the Divinity of Christ," one of the most plausible of the treatises on that side of the question, and the only one that Mr. Lindsey thought proper to reply to. For this work Mr. Robinson was very much caressed by the friends of the established church; and on this account, I believe, it was, that he had the offer of considerable preferment in the church of England, which, however, with great magnanimity, he rejected."

Dr. Rees, the learned editor of Chambers's Encyclopædia, speaks of Robinson as "follows:—

"To a person of Mr. Robinson's disposition, and ardent desire of knowledge, his situation in the vicinity of this celebrated University,—an University equally celebrated for its learning and moderation;—his acquaintance with many of its respectable Members, who honour-

ed his worth, however they differed from him in opinion ;—and his access to its valuable libraries, were advantages of great importance ; and which he knew how duly to estimate and to improve. I have often heard him express great satisfaction with the lot which Providence had assigned him. His talent for sprightly conversation, and his general knowledge, qualified him for being an agreeable companion to those literary friends, with whom he associated. And there are many of them, who, I am persuaded, sincerely lament the loss of him. If I might be allowed to express a wish on this occasion, it would be, that the congregation to which he ministered, may be able to supply the vacancy which his death has occasioned, by the choice of a gentleman of abilities and learning* ; whose character in this respect must redound in no small degree to the credit of the dissenting cause ; and preclude or obviate objections which the established clergy have sometimes, though, I trust, never with uncandid intentions, and often without sufficient reason, urged against the ministers of our churches. Indeed, a person of any other description cannot be a fit successor to your honoured pastor, or expect accept-

* The congregation have chosen a person of this description, Robert Hall, M. A. late a tutor at the Bristol Academy, a person of very respectable talents.

ance among the people to whom he ministered.

“To what a high degree your minister approved himself the enlightened, steady, and zealous friend of civil and religious liberty, it is needless for me to say. His praise is in all the churches. His preaching and his writings have been uniformly directed, according to his best judgment, to serve the great interests of uncorrupt Christianity, unlimited toleration, and universal liberty. His name has been often mentioned in the senate of the nation, sometimes with respect, but generally with a view of criminating and reproaching him. But those who have reproached him, have dishonoured themselves:—for the principles which he avowed, and which he studiously endeavoured to disseminate, are the fundamental principles of the British constitution:—and whatever opposition they may now meet with, they must ultimately prevail. He possessed ample powers of self-defence, and if his valuable life had been prolonged, his accusers would have been exposed; and the cause of civil and religious liberty would have found in him an able and zealous advocate.”

Dr. Toulmin, a respectable baptist minister at Taunton, Somersetshire, author of the *Life of*

Socinus, as well as various other publications, and editor of the new edition of Neale's History of the Puritans, observes of him as follows:—

“ He had not been long settled at Cambridge, before his singular talents and excellent qualifications began to be much noticed ; and, at the desire of the town and gown, he set up a Lord's-day-evening lecture, which was crowded. It was supposed that not less than one hundred and fifty or two hundred gownsmen generally attended*. His preaching was altogether without notes ; a method in which he was peculiarly happy ; not by trusting to his memory entirely, nor by working himself up to a degree of warmth and passion, to which the preachers among whom he first appeared, commonly owe their ready utterance ; but by thoroughly studying and making himself perfectly master of his subject, and a certain faculty of expression which is never at a loss for suitable and proper words. In short, his manner was admirably adapted to enlighten the understanding, and to affect and reform the heart. He had such a plainness of speech, such an easy and apparent method in

* Robinson was much attended by gownsmen, but rarely in such a manner as this. The worthy doctor was misinformed.

dividing a discourse, and such a familiar way of reasoning, as discovered an heart filled with the tenderest concern for the meanest of his hearers; and yet there was a decency, propriety, and justness, that the most judicious could not but approve. Several gentlemen of the university, eminent for character and abilities, were his constant hearers.

“ His good sense and generous spirit would not suffer him to go into the trammels of any party. Religious liberty, if I may be allowed the expression, was his idol. From this principle, he would not accept the pastoral office, till the congregation had consented to open and enlarge their communion, which till then had been formed upon the strict and rigid principle of an agreement in the questions concerning baptism. He was open to conviction, and the warm friend of free inquiry. It is a striking proof of this, that, as it is generally understood, he lately changed his sentiments concerning the person of Christ, and became a believer of the divine unity, after having published a popular piece to prove that Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, which procured him the offer of considerable preferment in the church.”

A writer in the “ Scotch Encyclopædia” speaks as follows:—

“ It may be reckoned a circumstance worthy of mention, that the sphere of Mr. Robinson’s ministry was the same in which his great grandfather, Mr. Shelly, of Jesus’-College, and vicar of All-Saints, had, with others, diffused the principles of the Puritans, about the beginning of the last century. The reputation of the dissenters in the university and neighbourhood had for almost a century been sinking into contempt, when Mr. Robinson settled with the baptist church at Stone-Yard. His abilities and assiduity, however, raised their reputation. The place in which his people assembled, which was at first a barn, afterwards a stable and granary, and then a meeting-house, but still a damp, dark, and ruinous place, soon became too small for the audience ; and several of the new auditors being men of fortune, they purchased the site, and erected at their own expence a new house in the year 1764.

“ The abilities of Mr. Robinson were very considerable, as appears from his numerous works ; and he possessed the quality of expressing his thoughts in an easy and a forcible manner. But he appears to have been of an unsteady temper, and, in our opinion, acquires but little credit from the frequency with which he changed his religious creed (for we have reason to believe he died a Socinian).”

We

We close this review of his character, with exhibiting his survey of the French Revolution.

It cannot but afford our readers pleasure, to be acquainted with Robinson's sentiments on these important transactions, a state of things, which, in future histories, will unquestionably be referred to as the grandest epoch in the history of mankind ; *Αστὴρ ἀριζήλος, ἀλαθινὸν ἀνδρὶ φεγγος**, "An unrivalled star, holding out the light of Truth to man."—As this appears a new point of sight, in which Robinson is seen in a very unambiguous and decided character, it seems not unnatural to close his memoirs with a quotation from the Advertisement to the Paris Revolution Magazine, the first number of which was translated from the original French, by Robinson, a short time before his death†, previously to the horrible events that afterwards occurred.

"The revolution itself is a truly wonderful work, and interesting in every view. As an event, it will furnish future historians with a subject worthy the dignity of history. Such times expose the latent powers of man, which rise and act, roused by the great objects before them. Reason exerts her most and best. The passions rise to high-water mark. Every thing

* Pindar. † In 1790.

swells to a size that renders glasses useless ; and even the most minute events are seen to have their necessity and importance.

“To a liberal mind expanding in benevolence, (and what but a miserable captive in chains, is a mind destitute of liberality?) such events teach the purest morality, by exposing the horrors of vice in a thousand seducing forms, and by displaying virtue in her beauty, benefits and strength, especially that virtue which is never cherished, without producing a harvest of happiness to whole nations at a time.”

APPENDIX.

I.

*Robinson's Confession of Faith, on being appointed
Minister of a Congregation, at Cambridge.*

1. OF God.—I believe, that there is one only living and true God, who is over all, blessed for evermore: by whom, and through whom, and for whom, are all things. 2. Of the scriptures.—That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God; were given by inspiration, and contain all things necessary to be believed and practised. 3. Of the trinity.—That in the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons, or substances—the father, the son, and the holy ghost, the same in substance, equal in majesty and glory. 4. Of predestination.—That God foresaw, and fore-appointed whatsoever comes to pass; that of his grace he elected a certain number of persons to salvation, predestinating them to the adoption of children by Christ, to the praise of the glory of his grace. That the salvation of the elect is all of the Lord. The reprobation of the wicked

ed of themselves. 5. Of the fall.—That God created the first man Adam, upright, and gave him a law which he was capable of obeying ; that, left to an entire freedom, he sinned against God, and as he was a public head, involved himself and all his posterity in sin and misery. 6. Of Jesus Christ.—That in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, vested with the threefold office, of prophet, priest, and king ; as a prophet, he taught a pure doctrine, and shewed a perfect example ;—as a priest, he expiated sin, and honoured the law, and having put away sin, became our advocate with the father in heaven ;—as a king, he reigns by his precepts over the hearts, minds, and lives of his followers. He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and remains there till his second coming. 7. Of justification.—I believe that we are justified freely by grace, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to the mercy of God, through the redemption, that is in Jesus Christ. 8. Of effectual calling.—That being, by nature, children of wrath, without merit, and without strength, the holy spirit, in his own time and way, impresses religious truths on the minds of the elect. That he gives them an evidence to the understanding, an authority over the will, and by them sanctifies the heart, reforms the life,

life, and renovates the whole man. 9. Of perseverance.—That such as are called by grace, persevere to eternal glory; they may fall foully, but not finally. 10. That good works proceed from a good principle—are directed by a right rule—and aim at a good end. That they are the necessary parts of a saving faith, essential to salvation, though not to justification. 11. That a new testament church is a voluntary society of Christians, agreeing in the essentials of faith, and in the mode of divine worship, assembling in one place, uniting in giving themselves up to the Lord, and to one another, by the will of God: that every such society has an independent right of chusing its own officers, and exercising such discipline, as the holy scriptures direct. 12. Of baptism and the Lord's supper.—That baptism is a New Testament ordinance of perpetual use, that it is only rightly administered by dipping, and a profession of faith and obedience; that the Lord's supper is an ordinance perpetually to be administered till the Lord comes; that 'as none ought to be forced into the church by baptism, without his consent, so none are to be kept from the Lord's supper, who conscientiously, though erroneously, approve of their own baptism in infancy. 13. Of the resurrection and final judgment.—I believe that there is an eternal state of happiness and misery; that
 God

God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ; that there will be a resurrection of both the just and unjust; when, souls and bodies re-united, all will receive the due reward of their deeds; the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

II.

*The Circular Letter of the Eastern Association,
held at Harlow, Essex, June 16th, 17th, and
18th, 1778.*

To the Protestant Dissenting Churches, usu-
ally denominated BAPTISTS, assembling for
Divine Worship,

At Cambridge,	Hempstead, Herts,
Cheneys, Bucks,	Hitchin, Herts,
Chesham, Bucks,	New-Mill, Herts,
Colnbrook, Bucks,	Over, Camb.
Harlow, Essex,	Woodrow, Bucks,
Hertford,	

This CIRCULAR LETTER is with great Respect
addressed,

By Robert Robinson,	{ John Whitby,
	{ John Raye,
Hugh Giles,	
James Sleap,	
William Walker,	
Isaac Gould,	{ James Sharp,
	{ Ralph Cocket,
Robert Baskerville,	
Morgan Jones,	{ Francis Chapman,
	{ Francis Bolton,
John Geard,	Thomas Caporn,
Henry Blaine,	
Richard Emery,	
Richard Morris,	

Ministers, and Messengers,
Representing the said Churches in
Association.

F f

“ Dear

" Dear and honoured Brethren,

" Through the great goodness of God, we, the ministers, and messengers of the associated churches, met in health, and peace, and quietly enjoyed what was graciously promised long ago, Zech. iii. 10.—In attending to the several letters, we find abundant cause for thankfulness, when we consider the peaceable and prosperous state of the churches in our connexion.—Our numbers increase—Our churches are comfortably provided with pastors—and peace subsists in the general body, and in each particular church.—But as Zion, in her militant state, has ever a mixture of groans, and complaints with her songs of joy, so we find it with ourselves.—We have cause to lament the small influence of the gospel of Christ on ourselves and others.—We view with sorrow the distracted state of our country.—We grieve for the almost general inattention of our countrymen unto the hand of God in our national troubles.—We mourn for the want of a spirit of prayer, by which we would take hold on a departing God, and prevail with him still to stretch the wings of his providential protection over our country, and to shed the beams of his gracious influence on his churches.—It is matter of sorrow to us to see among the professors

feffors of truth, fo many loofe livers, formal worshippers, neglecters of ordinances, fierce difputers, orthodox worldlings, and lukewarm christians.—Thefe things being confidered, the threatening appearance they wear apprehended, the confequences dreaded, and the remedy defired, we judged it expedient to appoint a day for humiliation, fafting, and prayer, to be obferved in all the congregations in our affociation, and request your ferious attention to that folemn bufinefs.

“ In our laft year’s addrefs, brethren, we earneftly recommended to you the ancient and ufeful cuftom of ASSOCIATING, and fet before you for example the praftice of our fathers in the faith.—This primitive institution, we believe, may under a divine bleffing be attended with fingular advantages, when conducted in love, and regulated by christian prudence.

“ By fuch a yearly correſpondence, we lay each church under a kind of neceffity to keep up the regular difcipline of God’s houfe. They are allured to look into their own ftate, in order to fend a juft account unto the affociated body, and are naturally led to an examination of their prefent circumftances.—This may prove a means to prevent thoſe awful confequences, which uſually follow an inattention to our pre-

sent state, both in individuals, and collected societies. Laodicea is said "*not to know*" perhaps for want of examination. Grey-hairs are often unseen, for want of attention to our own condition.—Had some men been in connexion with a society of merchants, to whom they judged it proper to send a yearly account of profit and loss, they had perhaps prevented that, which has been ruinous to themselves, and greatly detrimental to others.—Churches, in connection with an associated body, should doubtless make their minute remarks on their own state, at the return of the season; and the following things should be the objects of their attention.—The increase or diminution of their auditory—The regular or irregular attendance of the members on the ordinances in the church, whether public or private—The temper and frame (so far as may be discerned) of all under the preaching of God's word—and the apparent influence of the word, when it is preached, whether it be made the means of awakening the careless, restraining the vicious, or persuading souls to follow Christ, if the dejected be comforted, if saints be urged to a diligent pursuit after great measures of grace and holiness, and be built up in their most holy faith.—Thus, by a narrow inspection into the general state of the church, and a regard to the case of each member, the

pastor of each church might be led to form a more exact judgment of the good or bad state of his flock, and to rejoice, or mourn, according to its flourishing or declining condition.— His representation of this to the general body will give all an opportunity of assisting him by caution, by direction, by comfort, or advice, as best suited to his circumstances.

“ If this be strictly and conscientiously attended to by the officers of our several churches, the right *END* of associating may be expected. While we all unanimously seek to promote the glory of our God, and the spiritual profit and prosperity of his purchased people, we pursue the grand *end*, for which the Lord made us men, and made us Christians. In all religious institutions, brethren, there is a *GRAND END* proposed by God, and this end should ever be pursued by us. The grand end of *all* to be attended to in all ordinances is the glorifying of God, and our own salvation; and, though these seem to be two, yet they really are but one end, God having joined them so closely together, that it is impossible for any to put them asunder. When either of us look upon himself as a member of a smaller or larger body of religious men, we are ever to consider the end designed by God in making us such, and be duly careful to hold this end ever in view. Am

I a shepherd over a part of his flock? What is the end of my office? Am I a member of a christian church? What was the design of God, in putting me among his people? Is it not to fit me for his service on earth, and the enjoyment of himself in heaven, that he may be glorified in my salvation? If I be a true member of his true church, this is the end designed by God, and should always be pursued by me. A careless unconverted professor, in every part of his religious character, either pursues no end, or a bad one, and thus never considering the end of his church membership, not pursuing it, misses the grand end designed by God towards his own people, both in this world, and the next; for he is neither made holy here, nor happy hereafter. May each of you, brethren, under divine influence, be enabled ever to keep the right end in view in all your solemn dealings with God and his church! You may be sure, that the end of every gospel institution is answered to each of you, when each is made a wise, comfortable, and fruitful christian: wise by a spiritual discovery of the glory and goodness of divine truth; comfortable in a rich and sound experience of its life-giving power on your own soul; and fruitful by a practical improvement of its blessings in your life and conversation.

“ That there is great glory and much goodness

ness to be seen in the gospel of Christ, is not to be doubted; for it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, yet it is not every man's happiness to have a spiritual discovery thereof, witness Matt. xi. 25, and yet a spiritual discovery of the glory and goodness of gospel truth is indispensably necessary to make a man a *real christian*. It is not understanding the system, or scheme of evangelical doctrines, as laid down in creeds, and confessions, that works any sanctifying effects in the soul, or brings a man one step nearer Heaven: but it is a spiritual discovery of the glory and goodness of gospel doctrines, which makes a man wise unto salvation. Many there are, brethren, who, for want of attending to this distinction, awfully deceive themselves, and, at the same time they are orthodox professors, and look upon themselves as sound believers, they remain blind to the glory, and ignorant of the goodness, of those truths, which they profess to believe, and thus become doctors in divinity, while they remain dunces in real christianity.

“ This happens not because they don't in some senses know truth, but because they never had any spiritual discovery of its glory and goodness. It is a truth owned and acknowledged by all the professors of christianity,

“ *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save*

sinners :" but where the glory and goodness of this truth is seen by an enlightened understanding, it produces wonderful effects in the soul—See Phil. iii. 8.

" There is a sweet harmony and perfect agreement seen between the doctrines of truth, when viewed by a spiritual mind ; one serves to set off the lustre of the other ; and hence the doctrine of human depravity serves to magnify the riches of divine grace, and when viewed in conjunction with other truths, by those who feel the awful truth in their own breasts, it begets true humility, and produces an humble walk towards God and man—shews the absolute need of Christ's sacrifice—and begets profound admiration at God's love. This spiritual discovery of the glory and goodness of divine truth, brethren, (though overlooked by many) is the only thing that can make us truly wise. Many persons see the image of truth in a consistent set of sentiments, and content themselves with viewing the well-drawn picture, while the beauty of substantial truth is hid from their eyes. Take heed, brethren, of this deception. You would pity the deluded wretch, who prostrates himself before a painted puppet, and vainly imagines he has paid his acceptable service to the mother of God ; not less to be pitied is that man, who sees the consistency of doctrinal

doctrinal sentiments, and is blind to the glory of truth itself.

“ We pray for you all, brethren, that what was said of old 2 Cor. iv. 6, may be fulfilled in each of you to the joy of your souls: for where the Holy Ghost enlightens the understanding, and enables it to discover spiritual things in their *true* nature, God's glory, and a sinner's best interest, are seen inseparably united, and eternally secured.

“ God appears infinitely glorious, and the sinner unspeakably happy, and divine truth discovered to the understanding makes plain this inscrutable mystery. Thus it is we are made truly wise, and when the powerful influence of truth is felt on the soul, we are made truly happy, and unspeakably comfortable.— There is nothing, brethren, in the whole compass of knowledge, like gospel truth revealed to the soul to make men really happy. It is said to be life eternal, John xvii. 3. Truth acknowledged and confessed only will afford no real pleasure, but truth discovered in its glory, and felt in its comforting influence, with a solid persuasion of our own personal interest therein, will carry us through life and death composed and happy, joyful and triumphant. The notion of Christ dying for sinners may claim a cold assent,

assent, and beget a delusive hope in the heart of a dying formalist: but the felt persuasion of Christ dying for ME, removing the curse from ME, and fully delivering ME from the wrath to come, and thus opening a free passage for me to the throne of God, this, I say, delivers me from my guilty fears—inspires my soul with devout gratitude—begets in me exalted hopes of glory—makes me smile in death, and rejoice in the prospect of an opening eternity. Truth, brethren, is so far our own, as its influence is felt on our souls; and when the truth is thus brought home in its power on the soul, it never fails to produce its genuine effects in the conversation and life; for while it attracts me with its beauty, and comforts me with its sweetness, it regulates my words and actions by both.

“ Every good work must proceed from a good principle, and there can be no good principle in a sinner's heart until it is formed there by the power of truth.—The principles of religion, which we commonly call the doctrines of the gospel, or are termed by others Calvinistic sentiments, are the only powerful incentives to real holiness; but they never produce it in any except those, who discover their glory and feel their power. Their being held as sentiments by many, without being felt as powerful motives

motives and strong inducements to real godliness, have greatly exposed them to the contempt of the ignorant, and the fierce rage of opposers; but every one of you, brethren, who know the peace and comfort arising from a powerful persuasion of God's love, and a steadfast belief of his having forgiven you all sin, freely and fully, through the merit of his blessed Son; you, I say know that these mercies of God powerfully persuade you to give up your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to the Lord. Had God proposed a method of saving sinners, which did not make as suitable provision for their holiness, as it did for their happiness, it had been greatly to the detriment of his sacred character: but this can never be said with truth respecting the plan of wisdom revealed in the oracles of God, and professed by us.

“ It will certainly be found, where the glory of gospel truths is discovered, and their influence felt on the soul, that they will produce a conversation, which will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Can I see the wisdom, the justice, the mercy and the love of God, in punishing his beloved Son for my guilty soul, and enjoy the divine consolation, which this truth affords, and not be led to love and obey God in return for his goodness? It cannot be. You

are therefore, brethren, ever to distinguish between evangelical doctrines professed, and truth experienced in its power. Truth professed in doctrines constitutes a professor : but truth experienced in its power makes a Christian.

“ We most earnestly recommend it to you all to labour for a spiritual discovery of the glory and goodness of your own principles—a felt sense of their power on your own souls—and a practical improvement of them in the whole of your conversation. As many of you as have been savingly enlightened are sons of God. See the honour of your relation, and live under a felt sense of this, and it is impossible you can indulge sin.

“ Each of you stands in a threefold capacity, and has three distinct characters to attend to—you may be considered as men in the world—as members of the church—and as relations in the family.—In your *Christian* character these three are to meet. An honest man in the world—an honourable member of Christ's church—and a good relation in the family. The spiritual knowledge and comfortable enjoyment of your own principles is absolutely necessary to form you such Christians, as are useful to the world, and an honour to the church, and blessings to the families, in which
God

God has placed you. The grand end of all God's institution is then answered when you are thus made wise, comfortable, and fruitful Christians. The end for which we ministers labour, in the study, in our prayers, public and private, in our exhortations in your houses, and in our public ministrations, is then answered when you are brought to see the glory of the gospel, to feel its *transforming* influence, and when it is practically drawn out in your lives to the glory of God, the profit of men, and the real advantages of yourselves. For this, brethren, we associate—for this we preach—for this we hope—and for this we pray. When our labours are thus crowned with success, we shall see religion respected where it is not embraced, and your lives will condemn those, whom our preaching cannot reform : but if any of you be still blind, fordid, worldly, and impure, our labour is lost, our time and strength is spent for nought, we are disappointed, and you are eternally undone.—Brethren, remember you are made a spectacle unto God, angels, and men—Take care you don't prejudice the minds of the hardened world against the truth, while you profess to believe the best of principles, and live no better than they, who hold the worst.—The truths you profess are worthy of the allwise God to reveal, and of every wise man to embrace and believe.

Let

Let your conduct therefore powerfully convince every beholder, that your religion consists not in assenting to a set of dry speculative notions; but that you are influenced in heart and life by the soul-transforming truth of God.—If I profess, that God loved me before the world began—that his dear son redeemed me from hell by his blood—that I am brought out of a state of death and misery—that I am made a fellow citizen of the saints—that I am led by the spirit of God—and am training up through a variety of dispensations for an eternity of enjoyment with God,—can any thing be more reasonable, than that whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I should do all to the glory of God?

“ We are jealous, brethren, lest any of you should make the fatal mistake of thinking, that believing the truth of the doctrines of grace is believing on Christ. There is a material difference between a man’s believing the doctrine of remission and his believing on Christ for the forgiveness of his own sins. The former of these may remain a cold uninfluencing sentiment: the latter will prove a heart-purifying grace.

“ Give us leave then to remind you, brethren, that it is only the province of the divine spirit, to discover the beauty of divine truth to
the

the minds of men and powerfully to persuade the soul to embrace it from its discovered goodness. Our parents may teach us a consistent train of just sentiments, and help us to support the same by plain scripture proofs: but unless the spirit of God give the understanding a power of perception, and hold forth gospel truth in its native beauty before the soul, we shall remain ignorant of the true nature of every spiritual object. 1. Cor. ii. 14.—2. Cor. iv. 6. Until the goodness of them is apprehended by the mind, they will have no influence on the heart, nor can they produce any good effects in the life.

“ This being the case, our Lord, in his infinite compassion to his church, left us that comfortable promise, John, xvi. 13. from whence it appears that the office of the Holy Ghost is a LEADING INTO ALL TRUTH, and a principal part of truth is its goodness and the suitableness of it to the nature and known attributes of God.

“ May it then be your care, brethren, very constantly, in all your addresses at the throne of grace, to seek the guidance of the blessed spirit, both for your pastors and yourselves. Be often at the feet of Jesus for divine instruction—watch over your own hearts—and endeavour
to

to preserve a truly spiritual frame of soul—keep up the useful practice of reading the word of God, and prayer in your families, and beware of a formal spirit in the discharge of those duties.—Teach your children and servants that they are sinners and need a Saviour. Ask yourselves very frequently—Do I live under the exercise of grace? Is a throne of grace precious to me, in private? Let the gates of Zion ever be delightful to you, and appear there in season. Rejoice at opportunities of seeking the face of Jacob's God. Stand in a readiness for your master's appearance, with your loins girt about, in a waiting posture of soul. Look to yourselves, brethren, see that none of you fail of the grace of God. Take care that ye hide not the accursed thing, either in your house or heart, lest ye bring the fire of God on yourselves, and trouble the camp of the Lord. Strive to live a comfortable and useful life, and remember, that is a life of communion with God. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you. Amen.

B R E V I A T E S.

“ Harlow, Essex, June 16th, 1778.

“ Tuesday evening, 5 o'clock. Ministers, messengers, members of the associated, and other

other churches met at the meeting-house. The rev. Mr. Gould prayed. Mr. Jones was chosen moderator. Mr. Blaine secretary. The church at Over, Cambridgeshire, admitted. Secretary read the letters. General state of the churches discussed. Resolved, on a motion made by the church at Cambridge, That the churches in this association observe Monday, October 12th, 1778, as a general fast. Examined and approved the *plan of lectures on the principles of nonconformity*, drawn up by our brother Robinson, and agreed to adopt and recommend it.—Brother Blaine nominated to write the circular letter.—Moderator prayed, and adjourned the assembly.

“ Wednesday morning, 6 o'clock. The same assembly met again.—Mr. Robinson prayed.—Debated the expediency of regulating the admission of charitable cases from other churches, and agreed to recommend only such as were well attested by some member of the association.—Secretary read his plan of the circular letter, which was approved.—Moderator prayed—and adjourned the assembly.

“ Half past 10 o'clock.—Public worship begun with singing psalm cxxxii.—Mr. Morris prayed—sung psalm lxxxiv.—Mr. Geard preached from 1. Theff. v. 25. *Brethren, pray for us*.—Sung psalm cii. two verses.—Mr. Walker

prayed—sung psalm cxxxiii. two verses.—Mr. Giles preached from Eph. iii. 8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*—Sung cxix. hymn of the first book.—Mr. Sleaf concluded in prayer.

“ Six in the evening.—Mr. Brown prayed.—Mr. Robinson preached from Isaiah ii. 5, 6. *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.*—Mr. Clark prayed—and dismissed the assembly.

“ Thursday morning, 6 o'clock.—Met again.—Mr. Robinson prayed.—The case of the church at Cardington-end, Bedfordshire, read, approved, and recommended.—The next association to be held at Colnbrook, Bucks, on the Tuesday and Wednesday in Whitsun week, 1779. Messrs. Jones and Robinson to preach on the Wednesday.—The services to begin at the usual times.”

III.

*To the Two Congregations of Protestant Dissenters
in Cambridge, the following Memorial is hum-
bly presented.*

“CHRISTIANITY owes its institution to the love of God, and is admirably calculated to rectify the disorders, in which sin has evidently involved all mankind; and then only can it be said fully to answer the benevolent designs of its divine author, when the wolf lies down with the lamb, and the leopard dwells with the kid, or, what is the same, when Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free, are one in Christ Jesus; who ceasing to daub with the untempered mortar of party zeal, join together in building a church, founded in faith, and cemented by love, at once glorious to God, and advantageous to men.

“It is not now necessary to inquire by what means so many divisions have been made in the church of Christ: it is enough to observe, that they were neither authorised by Christ, nor encouraged by his apostles. The lord, above all things, pressed the necessity of union and love; and the apostle Paul ordered some of the first churches to mark that man who

caused divisions, and to avoid such an one, doubtless because such a dividing spirit was as destructive of their peace as of Christ's command; wherever encouraged, would dissolve the church into parties, till true religion evaporated, leaving the unhappy partisans only a name to live, while in fact they were dead. If the whole moral law is contained in one word, Love; if the whole gospel is a system of love; if love is that badge whereby men are known to be Christ's disciples; if when all the graces of the spirit are reduced to three, the greatest of these three is love; if that legislator, who has enjoined every duty, has, twice in the New Testament, assured us that he requires us, above all things, to have fervent love among ourselves, surely he must be totally ignorant of God, the law, the gospel, human nature, and his own heart also, who can dispense with the absence of so necessary a Christian temper for any circumstantial in religion,—who thinks himself authorised to divide from a society, and cease to love the members of it, merely on account of some small difference in sentiment, or practice. This I will venture to say, that nothing has so much contributed to weaken the church of Christ,—nothing has had so great an hand, in reducing her to her present feeble condition, as the unchristian and impolitic divisions of her members,

bers, who ought never to make two churches, where one would do : for while, by such means, they serve a party, they disserve real religion. Such (as a sensible writer says) are friends of the church, but enemies of God; and from such a spirit, the Lord deliver all honest-hearted Christians. If the above-mentioned Christian, and pacific tempers are needful any where, if the above reasons are weighty any where, they are at Cambridge, and so much the more needful there, as the situation is more conspicuous in the eyes of a whole university, than in a small village, or a common market town. Whoever reflects on the former and present state of affairs among the dissenters at Cambridge, will conclude so.

“ In Mr. Hufley's time, the church was the largest and the most flourishing of any in the country. He left Cambridge in the year 1720 : forty-six years are elapsed since, during which time, they have been broke into five or six parts: they are now collected into two, but no man has seen both flourish together : when one has increased, the other has visibly decreased. “ It is humbly conceived that there is a voice in this dispensation, and that he who bestows his influences thus, designs to teach us a lesson of unity. The good Lord preserve us from refusing him that speaketh. Since, therefore, one

of the congregations is at present without a pastor, it is presumed to be both the duty, and interest of the two societies to become one ; the lawfulness and expediency of which may be justified from the following considerations.

“ First, There does not subsist any difference between the two congregations in doctrine, or discipline, except the single article of baptism, (which also subsists in one of the churches already) : and that difference (as both churches allow) is not sufficient to divide a people; for it is to be observed, that those reasons which will justify two churches continuing asunder, will also justify one church in dividing into two; but where no such reasons are, it is plain, a junction is lawful. It is taken for granted, that if the two were one, no member would think there was a just cause of separation; and if there is no cause of making two, there can be no cause of keeping so.

“ Secondly, We have a precedent for the practice in the first churches. Then circumcision, keeping of ancient Jewish, or gentile festivals, eating and abstaining from certain meats, were bones of contention among Jews and Gentiles : yet it is said, to the honour of Christ, that he made of twain one new man, so making peace : and good reason there was

for their being one: the kingdom of God is neither meats, nor drinks, but righteousness, peace and joy in the holy ghost: let us, therefore, follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

“ Thirdly, We have also an express command for such a work, Rom. 15. 7. “ Receive ye one another,” that is the duty exhorted to, “ as Christ has received us,” — that the rule, by which we are to do the duty, “ to the glory of God ;” that is the end to be answered by a compliance. If Christ therefore has received both churches, both are here exhorted to receive each other. If we have a divine command, an authentic evidence of precedents, and no difference subsisting to tempt us to act contrary, the lawfulness of an union is clear beyond contradiction.

“ The expedience of the step appears by observing, first, that it is the true interest of the dissenters (as of all other associations engaged in one design) to be unanimous. If divisions have weakened the cause, as they evidently have, a junction must of necessity strengthen it: two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not easily broken. To think that this would weaken the cause in Cambridge by reducing two churches into one, is a mistake; for one society

of one hundred members is stronger than three of fifty members each, as will easily appear to every considerate person.

“ Secondly, An union would annihilate all those unbecoming bickerings, jealousies, and cavillings, which almost always attend the members of two societies so near neighbours. Some will always (through mistaken zeal) be guilty of such things, imagining that the weakening of one church is the strength of the other: but when one cause only is on foot, the weakest must perceive that the interest of one is the interest of all; and all the former animosities, being but effects of a division, must needs die with the cause that produced them.

“ Thirdly, It is absolutely expedient now, when one congregation is broken by an unhappy faction issuing in the withdrawment of several members. This is the ready, and, perhaps, only way of reclaiming them; and when the other congregation is conscientiously inquisitive how to act towards those members of the other place, who came amongst them; to carry it at a distance is to behave uncivilly, and looks like want of love: and to enter into close connections, is to weaken and offend a sister church: therefore as they are obliged to have some, the same spirit enables them to embrace all

all the church: and to say all in one word, an union removes the difficulties on both sides.

"Fourthly, Such an union would be much to the credit and reputation of religion, seeing it would enable the dissenters in Cambridge to acquit themselves generously to their poor, and to other good works which now are not to be done without burdening subscribers too much. The maintenance of one minister, and expense of one meeting-house being saved one way enables the people to do more another.—How pleasing the prospect! A large church walking in love,—a respectable congregation,—a minister well provided for,—poor comfortably assisted,—every thing done with credit and honour: how preferable such a case to the narrow views of any partisan whatever! and all this noble acquisition (grateful to all but bigots) the easy purchase of the spirit of love!—Robinson begs leave to subjoin: that to all this it may be objected—that though the flourishing state of the people, who make these proposals, must convince all the world that they are constrained to do it only by love, and not for any low sinister ends, yet this is to impose a minister on a whole congregation, whom, though they respect, yet they would not choose for their pastor.—Robinson's reply is this:

That

"That he is conscious of his incapacity, and wishes the Lord had bestowed on him gifts acceptable enough, to serve the people in this case; and since the lord had not been pleased to do so, he nevertheless, earnestly wishes the prosperity of Sion, and hereby promises to cede his pastoral office to any other minister, in whom the two congregations can unite, provided it can be done, and his removal agreed to by (as he does not see why it should not) his own people."

coral—Two children of the widow Fontaine.
Mrs. William H. Bell, **VI** aid for making the
bushels of coal, about 11 tons, in winter.

“FROM January the first, to June the twenty-fourth, there was distributed among the poor, of the church and auditory, in St. Andrew's parish, in money, cloathing, and firing, &c. twenty-five pounds, one shilling. The pastor observing how much œconomy is unknown to the bulk of the poor, how strong the temptation of those who live poorly is to spend the money given them about their bellies, and how much credit to the cause, and comfort to themselves, the poor would bring, if the money was laid out in educating their children, cloathing their families, laying in firing, allowing some old people weekly payments, &c. advised the deacons to procure their consent to such an use of their money. This was easily obtained, and many of their families were benefited this way. “Last Christmas,” says he, “the deacons purchased forty ells of Hemping, at 1s. 4d. per ell, which they distributed in shirting, shifting, &c.—forty-five baize, at 1s. 1d. per yard, for petticoats, besides stockings, handkerchiefs, and flannel waistcoats.—Mr. Ebenezer Hollick gave twenty-six yards of cloth for coats and waitcoats, valued at 3s. per yard.—Mr. Smith gave shirts, shifts, and handkerchiefs, at 2l. value.—Mr. Foster gave thirty bushels

bushels of coals, about 11. 10s. 1d. value.—
 Mr. William Hollick paid for making the
 coats.—Two children of the widow Pottage,
 one of William Johnson, &c. &c. have been
 taught to read, write, &c. by the deacons' al-
 lowances;—two widows, and two old men
 have weekly payments;—some have had so
 much in time of sickness, &c. and gifts of mo-
 ney repeatedly besides. The whole of the last
 six months is about 251. All this is supported
 by one public collection at Christmas, by Lord's
 supper, and by private gifts."

V.

A general view of the present state of the protestant dissenting interest in England, and Wales, now bearing a public testimony against the errors of the national church, communicated to me by my most worthy friend, the reverend Mr. Thomson, Feb. 24, 1775.

<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Number of Churches.</i>	<i>Baptists.</i>
Bedfordshire	19	17
Berkshire	14	5
Buckinghamshire	25	15
Cambridgeshire	21	7
Cheshire	24	3
Cornwall	7	2
Cumberland	17	4
Derbyshire	32	8
Devonshire	61	14
Dorsetshire	24	1
Durham	15	3
Essex	49	15
Gloucestershire	46	24
Hampshire	28	8
Herefordshire	9	3
Hertfordshire	18	9
Huntingdonshire	15	7
Kent	46	39
Lancashire	62	13
Leicestershire	39	23
Lincolnshire	22	16
Middlesex	86	13

Counties.

<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Number of Churches.</i>	<i>Baptists.</i>
Monmouthshire	13	6
Norfolk	21	9
Northamptonshire	37	17
Northumberland	40	3
Nottinghamshire	19	10
Oxfordshire	11	2
Rutlandshire	5	3
Shropshire	11	3
Somersetshire	53	15
Staffordshire	14	0
Suffolk	33	3
Surry	12	2
Sussex	19	12
Warwickshire	23	10
Westmorland	3	0
Wiltshire	39	19
Worcestershire	16	7
Yorkshire	70	20

VI.—The Present State of Non-conformity in Cambridgehire, 1775.

Towns.	Denominations.	Pastors or Ministers.	Members.	Hearts.
Cambridge	P. Baptist	R. Robinson, P.	120	600
	Independent	Rev. Joseph Saunders, P. 1767		
Barwell	Presbyterian	Rev. — Robotham, P.		200
Catidge	Independent	Rev. Joseph Maulden, P.	20	100
Cottenham	Independent	Rev. — Morley, M.		300
Everiden	Independent	Rev. Joseph Billing, M.		
and Barrington	Independent	Rev. John Bond, P. 1750		
Gamlinghay	P. Baptist	Rev. Benjamin Morgan, P.		
Guilhorn	P. Baptist	Supplied by R. James Parker.		
Isleham	Independent	Rev. Sam. Lambert, P.	27	
Linton	Independent	Rev. Thomas Curtis, P.		
March	P. Baptist			
Melbourne	G. Baptist	Rev. Thomas Barron, P.		30
Fulbourne	Independent	Rev. Richard Cooper, P.		20
Over	G. Baptist	Rev. Thomas Barron, P.		100
Royston	Independent	Rev. Richard Emery, P.		
Soham	Independent	Rev. Thomas Wells, P.		100
Willingham	P. Baptist	Rev. Thomas Adam, P.		100
Wisich	Independent	Rev. Andrew Fuller, M.		200
Wilbraham	P. Baptist	Rev. Thomas Boodyer, P.		100
	G. Baptist	Rev. John Eve, P.		20
		Rev. Thomas Barron, P.		

N. B. P. Baptist stands for particular baptist. G. Baptist, for general baptist. P. and M. for pastor and minister.

** The reader will please to take notice, that, of the churches, whose members are not reckoned up, some were large. Why they are passed by, I know not.

VII.

"THE particular baptist church of Christ, at Cambridge, to the churches of the same faith and order in association at Cambridge, May 13 and 14, 1777, wisheth grace and peace.

" REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,

" We beg leave to approach you in the most cordial affection,—and to assure you, although we do not think ourselves worthy of the honour of receiving you under our roof,—yet we rejoice in the privilege of which we are possessed by your doing so. We have therefore appointed Messrs. Foster and Hollick,—the first, one of our junior deacons, and the last one of our worthy auditors, to superintend this association, for the accommodation of the ministers, lest they should be hindered in prosecuting the laudable design of their assembling; and for the provision of conveniencies for our poor country members, lest they should be deprived of the benefit of attending.

" We have also appointed our two senior deacons, Messrs. Tyson and Whitby, our messengers to accompany our pastor to this association. We bless God, we are in peaceable, prosperous, and increasing circumstances as a
8 church.

church. We have much to lament, as individuals, and many things to amend, reform and improve, as a body ; but our God is as good as he is great, and to him we look up for supply.

“ We look back with horror on those past times of persecution, which denied our ancestors the liberty of publicly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. We still keep their original design in view, of reforming the church to its primitive simplicity ; and we adopt this method of communion with other churches, by annual association, as a branch of primitive religion, which, under the divine blessing, may be productive of great spiritual advantages to us and our posterity, unless our own folly defeat your good designs.

“ We confess, brethren, we entered this association with great jealousy and caution ; for although we clearly saw the practice of associating, consulting, and mutually assisting in the purest ages of christianity, yet we could not but recollect, that such associations were in the end productive of the great antichristian apostasy, an apostasy so fatal to the civil and religious liberties of mankind, and particularly to those of the brave old puritans and non-conformists, that the very words, Synod, and

H h

Session,

Session, Council, and Canon, yet make both the ears of a sound protestant dissenter to tingle. This branch of primitive godliness, we think, is not to be rejected; and we praise you, brethren, that you have precluded all complaints, silenced all our fears, and given us entire satisfaction on this article, by so fully and explicitly renouncing all kind of jurisdiction over conscience. We venerate the communion of the saints:—and as you come by our own invitation,—pretend to no authority over us,—do not even take the liberty to interrogate us on any other articles than those which we choose to lay before you,—and then offer us advice, but not law; we bid you a Christian welcome, and bless God for granting us the honour and the pleasure of this interview.

“ Permit us, brethren, only to add, that since it is with newly incorporated societies as it is with young plants,—and that ply may be given with a very little trouble at first, which no labour can produce afterward,—we pray that a double portion of penetration and disinterestedness, unanimity and prudence, gentleness and benevolence, may be bestowed upon you; may your motives and aims still continue to be pure, and all your transactions be full of evidence of your pure intentions—may this—may every future association, be a new preparation for,
and

and pleasing prelibation of that general association of the church of the first-born, to which, through grace, we hope shortly to come.

“ JOHN STANFORD.

“ Cambridge, April 17, 1777.

“ Second quarterly meeting, signed by order of all the church.”

VIII.

“THE generous design of the reverend Andrew Gifford, of introducing into the baptist churches sound and sufficient learning, and, for this purpose, of bestowing certain valuable original paintings, books, &c. in order to a foundation, would have been glorious in any man, and is most of all so in a man whose abilities and merit have not been sufficiently understood in some few of our leading churches. The baptist cause wants only learning to give it credit and success.—The doctor having condescended to impart his design to a friend, his friend, with the utmost deference to the doctor’s superior judgment, ventures to affirm, that the project, which is noble in itself, may be rendered effectual to the ends proposed, by founding an house to be supported by a trading company: there are only three ways of supporting such a house,—subscription,—endowment,—and trade. The way of subscription is troublesome, annual, precarious, and small. That of endowment, either in the rents of lands or houses, or in the interest of monies, requires a large capital, and produces small stipends.

“The way of trade is most eligible. Subscriptions,

scriptions, legacies, and donations may raise a capital, and proper men may be empowered to employ it in trade, applying the profits to the support of the house. The houses of the Jesuits have been supported by this method ;— the American congress have obtained independence, by acting in the capacity of a trading company; and of old, the practice was authorised by the highest authority; for Solomon built the temple with money obtained by trade.—In order to realise these ideas, then, the following articles are proposed.

“ I. Let doctor Gifford draw up his plan of education, and let him calculate the expenses attending it. It is supposed a few boys might be lodged and boarded in a private house at Cambridge, and in four years educated by the professors there, at the fountain-head, at no very great expense.

“ II. Let the doctor, by deed properly executed, consign over to certain gentlemen nominated by himself, whatever he thinks proper to contribute towards this foundation: let these men hold in trust, under certain conditions, one of which may be,—that, in case a plan which the doctor proposes, can be effected in such a time, then the doctor's donations shall be applied so and so; and if not, then they, the company in

trust, shall deposit what they hold in such or such places, or shall deliver them to such or such persons as the doctor shall appoint.

“ III. Let a subscription be opened for a capital sum to be employed in trade, at the discretion of the company in trust, and let certain persons for the time being,—the lord chancellor, the and the be appointed visitors of this foundation, who shall determine finally, whether this trust have been faithfully discharged.

“ IV. Let the company be directed to reserve a part of the annual profit arising from their commerce year after year, till they have accumulated a sum sufficient to purchase or build a house, to be called the Baptist-college ; and let the first and best room in it be called the Giffordian room, and used always to contain the pictures, &c. of the said Dr. Gifford.

“ V. Let there be an annual commemoration of benefactors, by an oration in memory of the benefactors, and particularly of the reverend founder,—then let there be a general meeting,—divine worship in the chapel,—an oration commemorative in the hall,—a choice of officers,—an audit of accounts, and a public dinner. These keep things from being forgotten and lost.

It

" It is pretty certain many rich baptists would contribute largely to such a foundation; and a donation, such as the doctor's, would be a strong inducement to it, were it conducted by proper persons.—May the God of all grace, who hath always preserved these our poor churches in their low estate, mercifully shine on this plan of public utility !"

IX.

ON reading Robinson's Plan of a New College, many reflections naturally arise on the monopoly of literature, and the impolicy of exclusive establishments; but as these have already been pursued to a considerable extent, in my "Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles*," they shall not be indulged again. It shall only be added, that, with respect to the different religionists among protestants, this monopolising spirit in our public institutions is not only contrary to the claims of common justice, but to the intentions of the original founders. It was ungracious and impolitic, to narrow the terms of admission into these houses by subsequent statutes, instead of widening them according to the circumstances of the times. Such conduct is not only unjust, but tends to perpetuate a kind of quackery in the sciences†.

* See the First Part of the Second Edition.

† On the reasons why science is made so difficult of attainment, see some excellent observations in a most useful and learned little work entitled the "Memoirs of Planetes, pp. 102, 103. These observations are well illustrated in "A Proposal for facilitating the Progress of Science, exemplified in the Osteological part of Anatomy." See "A Triplet of Inventions, by Thomas Northmore," published for Owen, Piccadilly.

To

To these institutions, thus circumscribed, I cannot forbear accommodating the words of an old divine, taken from a curious sermon, preached at Paul's Cross, 1550*.

“ By the whyche euerye man maye perceyue that the kynge geuyng manye thynges and takynge nothinge from the uniuerfityes, was very desirous to have them increased and amended. Howbeit all they that have knowen the unyuersitye of Cambryge sence that tyme that it dyd fyrst begynne to receyue these greate and manyefolde benefytes from the kynges majesty, at youre handes, haue just occasion to suspecte that you have deceyued boeth the kynge and uniuerfitye, to enryche youre felues.

* A sermon preached at Paul's Cross the 14th day of December, by Thomas Lever. The reader will perceive, that the above singular passage is rather forced into my service, and quoted in a way of accommodation. Indeed it was introduced, in a great measure, for the sake of the very curious particulars at the close, which, it must be acknowledged, are not connected with the subject; though from this extract may be inferred the injustice of the present monopolising spirit in our universities. I am indebted, for the loan of this book, to the ingenious Dr. Farmer. From the contents of the sermon, I intended to have illustrated something in the body of this work; but I did not receive it in time. Part of it has been pointed out before by Dr. Farmer, and printed by Dr. Percy and others.

For before that you did beginne to be the disposers of the kinges liberalitie towards learning and pouerty, there were in houses belonging unto the uniuersityte of Cambryge, two hundred studentes of dyuynytye, many verye well learned; whyche bee nowe all clene gone, house and manne, young towarde scholers, and old fatherlye doctors, not one of them lefte: one hundred also of an other sorte that hauyng rych frendes or beyng benefyced men did lyue of theym selues in ostles and innes beyther gon awaye, or elles fayne to crepe into colleges, and put poore men from bare lyuynge. Those bothe be all gone, and a small number of poore godly dylygent studentes nowe remaynyng only in colleges be not able to tary and contynue theyr studye in y^e uniuersityte for lacke of exhibicion and healpe. There be dyuers ther whych ryse dayly betwixt foure and fyue of the clocke in the mornynge, and from fyue untill fyxe of the clocke, use common prayer wyth an exhortacion of gods worde in a common chappell, and from fyxe unto ten of the clocke use ever eyther pryuate study or commune lectures. At ten of the clocke they go to dynner, whereas they be contente with a peny pyece of byese amongest iiii. hauyng a fewe porage made of the brothe of the same byese, wyth salte and otemell, and nothyng els.

“ After

“ After thys slender dinner they be either teachyng or learnynge untill v. of the clocke in the euenyng, when as they haue a supper not much better then theyr dyner. Immedyately after the whyche, they go eyther to reasonyng in problemes or unto some other studye, untill it be nyne or tenne of the clocke, and there beyng without fyre are fayne to walk or runne up and downe halfe an houre, to gette a heate on their feete whan they go to bed.

“ These be menne not werye of theyr paynes, but very forye to leue theyr studye: and sure they be not able some of theym to contynue for lacke of necessarye exhibicion & relese. These be the luyng fayntes whyche serue god takyng greate paynes in abstinence, studye, laboure and dyligence, wyth watching and prayer. Wherefore as Paule, for the fayntes and brethren at Hierusalem, so I for your brethren and fayntes at Cambrydge mooste humblye beseeche you make youre colleccions amongst you rich marchauntes of this citey, and send them youre oblacions unto the unyuerstyte, so shall ye be sure to please God, to comfort them, and prouyde learned men to do muche good throughout all thys realme. Yea and truly ye be detters unto them: for they haue sowed amongst you the spirituall treasures of goddes worde,

worde, for the whyche they ought to repe of you agayne corporall necessaries. But to return unto them that shoulde better haue prouyded for learnynge and pouertye in all places, but especyally in the uniuersties.

“ Loke whether that there was not a greate number of both lerned & pore that might haue ben kepte, mayntayned, and relyeued in the uniuersties : whych lackying all healpe or comforte, were compelled to forsake the unyuerstyte, leue their bokes, & seeke theyr lyuyng abroad in the country? Yea & in the cuntry manye grammar scholes founded of a godly intent to brynge up poore mennes sonnes in learnynge and vertue, nowe be taken awye by reason of the gredye couetousnes of you that were put in trust by God, and the kyng to erecte and make grammer scholes in many places : and had neyther commandement nor permission to take away the scholmasters lyuyng in anye place, moreouer muche charitable almes was there in manye places yerely to be bestowed in pore townes and parishes upon goddes people, the kynges subiectes : whiche almes to y^e great dyspleasure of god and dishonoure of the kinge, yea and contrarye to goddes worde and the kynges lawes, ye haue taken awaye. I knowe what ye do saye and
bragge

bragge in some places : that ye haue doen as ye were commaunded wyth as much charytye and lyberalitye towardes both pouertye and learnynge, as youre commiffion woulde beare and suffer."

X.

*Chronological Catalogue of the Various Publications
of the late Robert Robinson.*

“ I. A Translation of a few of Saurin’s Sermons: printed in 1770, for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge.

“ II. The Nature and Necessity of early Piety: a Sermon, preached to a Society of young People, at Willingham, Cambridgeshire, 4to. Printed for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge, 1772. A second edition of this Sermon was printed by William Pine, Bristol, 8vo. 1777.

• “ III. Arcana; or, the Principles of the late Petitioners to Parliament for Relief in the Matter of Subscription. In Eight Letters to a Friend. 1. On Candour in Controversy. 2. On Uniformity in Religion. 3. On the Right of private Judgment. 4. On Civil Magistracy. 5. On Innovation. 6. On Orthodoxy. 7. On Persecution. 8. On Sophistry. 8vo. printed for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge, and Dilly, London.

“ IV. A curious Discussion of the Question, Is it Lawful and Right for a Man to marry the
Sister

Sister of his deceased Wife? 8vo. published in the Appendix to the Legal Degrees of Marriage; stated and considered—by John Alleyne, Barrister at Law. Second Edition, 1775, printed for Almon.

“V. A Lecture on a becoming Behaviour in Religious Assemblies; delivered on Sunday Evening, January 10, 1773, at the Meeting-house, in St. Andrew's, Cambridge; and printed at Cambridge, 1776.

• “VI. A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: in a Pastoral Letter, addressed to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge. 8vo. printed for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge, and Keith, &c. London, 1776.

“The Fourth Edition of this Tract was published in 1780. It obtained for the author many compliments from dignitaries of the established church, and offers of considerable preferment.

“VII. The Circular Letter of the Eastern Association, held at Hemel Hempstead, Herts, May, 1776.

• “VIII. The History and Mystery of Good Friday. 8vo. Buckland, London, 1777.

“To

" To Philip Anthony De la Faye, esq. this bagatelle, written at his request, is with profound respect, inscribed by his most obedient, Lewis Carbonell. This small Tract has been re-printed several times in 12mo.

"IX. A Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Nonconformity, for the Instruction of Catechumens. 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson, 1778. A fifth edition was printed for Macgowan, London, 1781, with an additional Preface, 12mo. This Work has been cited more than once in both Houses of Parliament. On some detached passages in these Lectures, Edmund Burke grounded a very unjustifiable attack on the principles of the dissenters, in the last debate, on the motion of Charles Fox, for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. The attack was ably repelled by the mover.

" X. Sermons, translated from the Original French of the late James Saurin, Pastor of the French Church, at the Hague. In 4 vols. 8vo. printed at Cambridge, in 1775, 1777, and 1782, and published by subscription. A second edition, comprehending 5 vols. was printed for Dilly, London, in 1784. Each of these volumes is introduced with an excellent Preface, by the translator. In the Preface to the first volume, we have Memoirs of the

face to the first volume, we have *Memoirs of the Reformation in France, and of the Life of Mr. Saurin*. To the second are prefixed *Remarks on Deism*. The third contains just and animated *Reflections on Christian Liberty, and Human Explications of a Divine Revelation*. The fourth volume is introduced with *Observations on the Nature and Obligations of Man, and on the Moral Influence of the Gospel*. To this volume is annexed *M. Dumont's Essay on the Conduct of David at the Court of Achish, King of Gath, in a Letter to M. Saurin*. This writer supposes, that David was seized with a real epilepsy, occasioned by terror, and directed by Providence for his greater security. The Preface to the fifth volume contains critical *Remarks on the character of M. Saurin, as a Preacher*; and specifies various particulars in doctrine, rites, discipline, and other circumstances, in which the translator disagrees with him.

XI. *Christianity, a System of Humanity, &c.*
A Sermon in behalf of the Charity-School, at Horsley-down, Southwark; preached at Salters'-hall, March 3, 1779. Printed for Buckland, London.

“ XII. *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, translated from the Original French*
I i of

of the Rev. John Claude, Minister of the French Reformed church, at Charenton. With notes. In 2 vols. 8vo. Printed by Hodson, at Cambridge; and sold by Dilly, London, 1779. To the first volume is prefixed the Life of M. Claude, in which are introduced many excellent observations on religious liberty. The Introduction to the second volume is an elaborate dissertation on the ministration of the divine word, by public preaching. The notes display a very extensive reading. They are selected with judgment, and serve not only to elucidate the text, but to afford the reader both information and entertainment.

“ XIII. Christian Submission to Civil Government: a Discourse preached at Cambridge, January 30, 1780. Cambridge, Hodson, 1780.

“ XIV. The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies. A Sermon preached at the Rev. Dr. Fordyce's Meeting, in Monkwell-street, London, December 25, 1780, to the Society that support the Evening Lecture there. London, Etherington, 1781. To which is added an Appendix, containing a criticism on the text, 2 Corinthians, iv. 3, 4. which the author thinks should be translated thus: *If our Gospel be veiled, it is veiled among the Things that are abolished*

lished (i. e.) *Jewish Ceremonies, by which the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, &c.* The design of the Sermon is to vindicate the worship of our Non-conformist churches, by giving an answer to this plain question, *Why do we respect the Ceremonies of the Jewish Religion, and reject the same Ceremonies in the Christian Religion ?*

“ XV. The General Doctrine of Toleration, applied to the particular Case of Free Communion. 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson, 1781.

“ XVI. The Kingdom of Christ not of this World. A Sermon preached at Broadmead, Bristol, August 28, 1781—being the day of the Annual meeting of the Education Society. Bristol, Pine, 1781.

“ XVII. The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. A Sermon preached at Salters'-Hall, London, September 11, 1782, in behalf of the Bible Society. London, Lepard, 1782.

• “ XVIII. A Policital Catechism, intended to convey in a familiar manner, just Ideas of good Civil Government, and the British Constitution. London, Dilly, 1782.

“ XIX. Sixteen Discourses on several Texts
I i 2 of

of Scripture, addressed to Christian Assemblies, in Villages near Cambridge. To which are added six Morning Exercises. 8vo. London, Dilly, 1786.

“ XX. A Discourse, addressed to the Congregation at Maze-pond, Southwark, on their public declaration of having chosen Mr. James Dore, their Pastor, March 24, 1784.

“ XXI. A Sermon, preached at the Ordination of the Rev. George Birley, St. Ives, Hunts, 1784.

“ XXII. An Essay on Liberality of Sentiment, published, with some mutilation, in the first number of the Theological Magazine ; by Mr. De Coetlogon.

“ XXIII. A Plan of a Charity School, for the Education of the Boys and Girls of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge.

“ XXIV. Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity. A Sermon preached at Cambridge, February 10, 1788. Bowtell, Cambridge, and Dilly, London.

“ XXV. A Sermon on Sacramental Tests, preached at Cambridge, November 5, 1789.
To

To which is subjoined an Essay on the Slave Trade. Cambridge, Hodson and Bowtell.

“ XXVI. A Translation of three Numbers of the *Revolution de Paris*, in 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson and Bowtell. London, Knott, 1790.

“ XXVII. The History of Baptism. Printed for Knott, Lombard street.

“ XXVIII. Ecclesiastical Researches ; printed for Johnson, St. Paul's Church-yard ; Murray, Fleet-street ; Knott, Lombard-street ; and Dunn, Fleet-street.”

* * * This Catalogue is taken from the end of Dr. Rees's Sermons.



ERRATA.

- Page 47, Notes, for *third*, read *fourth*.
52, l. 17, for 1775, read 1765.
67, l. 6, for *Michael*, read *Richard*.
113, l. 24, for *third*, read *fourth*.
114, l. 11, dele *.
209, l. 10, for *cases*, read *cares*.
284, Notes, for *Charles*, read *Cadogan*.
302, l. 2, for *pronounce*, read *pronounced*.
400, verse 2, l. 3, for *yea*, read *ye*.

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